



50P

No. 65,713

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

TODAY

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ENTERTAINMENT,
AND 7-DAYS' TV,
RADIO AND SATELLITE



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MONDAY

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INSIDE YOUR 8-SECTION TIMES: 101 ESSENTIAL TIPS • EIGHT BOOKS THAT WILL IMPROVE YOUR LIFE • TOKEN 1: THE DIRECTORY, PAGE 51

'The world is in chaos... something remarkable has to come from his death'

Head's widow appeals for moral revival

BY JOANNA BALE

THE widow of the murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence called yesterday for a public debate to work out how to rid society of violence and establish new moral codes, especially among young people.

Frances Lawrence said that in launching her campaign she would be carrying out her husband's wishes. This was something that Philip and I talked about long before he died. That we had got to a point where the whole world was in a state of chaos and something needed to be done.

"We talked about it endlessly. At his death I just knew that I couldn't leave this unremarked. He was a remarkable man and something remarkable had to come from his death as much as from his life."

Mrs Lawrence was speaking in an interview with *The Times* in which she told of the nightmare she had lived since 16-year-old Leacro Chindamo stabbed her husband outside his London school last December. She said she wanted to see young people like Chindamo given values and something to shape their lives, and her manifesto for a new morality will be published in *The Times* on Monday.

Mr Lawrence earned a reputation as an inspirational teacher and headmaster and was credited with having

transformed the standards of St George's comprehensive school in Maida Vale in the two years he was there.

Mrs Lawrence said: "To me, Philip was a giant among men. He always wanted to challenge and I think he felt that perhaps young people today feel unchallenged and undervalued. It's only when you are challenged and therefore achieve something that life becomes worth living."

She now hopes to establish a forum for debate after receiving more than 5,000 letters from people who have echoed her thoughts in wanting a better world for their children to grow up in.

She said her husband's death had brought home to many the ills of society and its downward spiral towards increasing violence and rampant materialism. But their family had already been concerned about the way children's lives were being blighted by violence. She said: "It was a 12-year-old girl stabbed in her classroom that really devastated Philip. The destruction of society is very obvious and we see it all the time in newspaper reports, but this incident really stood out."

Nikki Connolly was stabbed at Hallgarth School in Middlebrough in 1994 by Stephen Wilkinson, a psychopath who burst into her classroom wearing combat gear and carrying a gun and two knives. He ordered people to kneel facing a wall and stabbed Nikki because she could not stop crying.

Mrs Lawrence has had letters from Nikki's parents and from other victims of violence. She said: "It has really been overwhelming. Each one makes its own points and I would like to respond to all of them, but it would take me years.

"Instead, I would like people to start to debate in a very public way about what can be done. Education is obviously one of the central issues in this. I can't change what has happened. I can't bring Philip back. Our task now is to aim for growth. I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I think that something needs to be done before it is too late."

Children needed to be encouraged to think rather than to follow blindly. "Philip's killer was a leader of a Triad group, which is a very good example of what I mean by this. Not thinking for themselves which leads to horrendous consequences. The nation is engaged in a process of reduction of values and principles. Thinking almost seems to be out of the equation."

Sorrow for killer, page 3



Frances Lawrence in the garden of her home in Ealing, west London, yesterday. Photograph: Gill Allen

Youth held after slab hits motorist

A 16-year-old youth was arrested last night after a motorist was critically injured when a 50lb concrete block thrown from a bridge over the M3 in Hampshire smashed through his windscreen and hit him on the head.

Simon Willmott, 22, of Bagshot, Surrey, was driving at 70 mph. He blacked out but managed to stop the car and was in intensive care at Frimley Park Hospital, Camberley. — Page 5

Hennman victory

Tim Hennman, of Britain, beat Wayne Ferreira, the South African ranked seventh in the world, to reach the semi-final of the Czech Indoor Tournament. He served powerfully and deep with ten aces and displayed a canopy of ground strokes. — Page 52

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WEATHER 26
CROSSWORD 26
COURT & SOCIAL 24

Court battle to cut the cost of popular pills and potions

BY DOMINIC KENNEDY, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

POPULAR over-the-counter medicines could become cheaper if the Office of Fair Trading succeeds in an attempt to outlaw price-fixing by drug companies.

John Bridgeman, the director general, is applying to a court to recommend the abolition of a 26-year-old agreement which sets a minimum price for 2,273 brands of vitamins, syrups, tablets, lozenges and ointments.

Supporters of retail price maintenance say that a quarter of Britain's 10,000 neighbourhood pharmacies might close if supermarkets are allowed to sell brands such as Lemsip, Rennie and Nurofen more cheaply. But Mr Bridgeman accused them of scheming and of exaggerating the number of chemists at risk.

Even pharmacists accepted

that an end to price-fixing could save consumers £180 million a year, he said. "Retailers who want to compete on price or offer special discounts to pensioners are unable to do so because they are forced by manufacturers and suppliers to sell at a fixed price."

The position of local chemists had changed greatly since 1970 when price-fixing was introduced: the number of community chemists was then declining, now it was stable, and they now relied more on prescriptions than on over-the-counter products.

"I am convinced that it is time for the Restrictive Practices

Court to look at this again

and decide whether RPM is in the public interest." A preliminary hearing is expected next spring, but a full hearing is unlikely before 1998.

The Office of Fair Trading began its review after Asda — which helped to destroy the Net Book Agreement by cutting the price of hardbacks — cut the cost of 82 vitamin and health supplements.

If the Restrictive Practices Court agrees to forbid price-fixing, shoppers can expect to see the price of some brands halved. But the Community Pharmacy Action Group says it will fight "all the way".

RPM price £ Ada own label

Paracetamol (24 pack) £1.75 £1.60

Lemsip (10 pack) flu strength £2.39 £1.89

Seven Seas Cod Liver Oil One a day (60) £3.59 £1.79

Rennie (48) £1.99 £0.99

Strapax (24) £1.79 £0.99

Nurofen (12) £1.39 £0.99

Aspirin Extra (24) £2.22 £0.99

Top general sacked in Yeltsin purge

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

PRESIDENT YELTSIN yesterday continued his purge of senior military figures when he removed Russia's highest ranking officer from his post.

The Defence Ministry said that General Mikhail Kolesnikov, Chief of the Russian General Staff and First Deputy

of the General Staff, was relieved of his duties and assigned to the largely ceremonial job of chief of staff of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a non-existent force. He will be replaced by General Viktor Samsonov, who was formerly responsible for cooperation with former Soviet republics.

Although Kremlin aides last night were at pains to dissociate the move from the dismissal of General Aleksandr Lebed, the former National Security Adviser, the timing was not coincidental. The

main reason for General Lebed's sacking was the growing fear in the Yeltsin administration that the demoralised and disgruntled military could rebel because of the disintegration of the armed forces due to lack of funding.

On Thursday the daily *Nezvezdnyaya Gazeta* published an open letter by officers serving at the General Staff, under General Kolesnikov's command, threatening to take action against Kremlin leaders if their salaries dating back to August were not paid by October 25.

On the same day the deputy commander of the country's airborne forces was dismissed after criticising plans by the Ministry of Defence to reduce the number of paratroopers in the army.

Military unrest, pages 14, 15

Black Friday on the roads as holiday grinds into gear

By RUSSELL JENKINS

THE RAC called yesterday Black Friday as Britain's motorway network suffered some of the worst congestion of the year.

Motorists were anxious to start the weekend early or get away at the beginning of the school half-term holidays, and by the evening rush hour up to half a million vehicles were clogging motorways and major trunk roads at speeds of under 30mph.

Black Friday followed a warning

from the RAC that the Government's own medium-term forecasts show that many of the built-up areas of Britain will by 2015 suffer gridlock during working hours.

Britain was hit yesterday by successive bands of driving rain sweeping across the country. Today will start dry and bright but showers are forecast for Scotland and the North later.

The RAC released the Department of Transport's own "stress" maps which show how congestion is likely to grow

over the next nine years. They have been described by the RAC as a nightmare vision of the future. By 2015, the Government's own forecast suggests, every major route out of London will be subject to severe congestion through most of the working day. Congestion will have extended to most of the Midlands and key strategic routes to the North. By 2005 one third of the motorway and trunk roads will suffer chronic congestion, the RAC says.

In financial terms, it is estimated

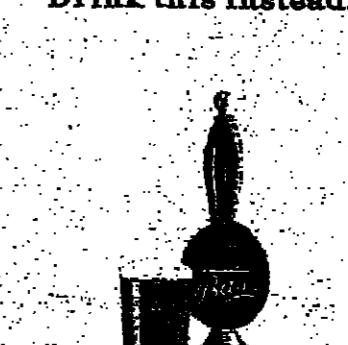
that congestion costs the UK economy around £19 billion each year. Using the stress maps, the motoring organisation forecasts that costs will escalate disproportionately to around £40 billion within ten years.

It is estimated that motorists already spend five working days each year caught in traffic jams with a consequent knock-on effect on the economy. This is forecast to rise to two working weeks.

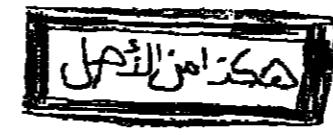
Forecast, page 26

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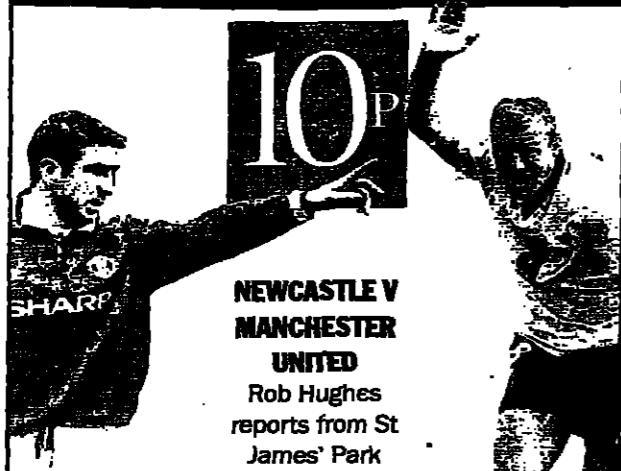


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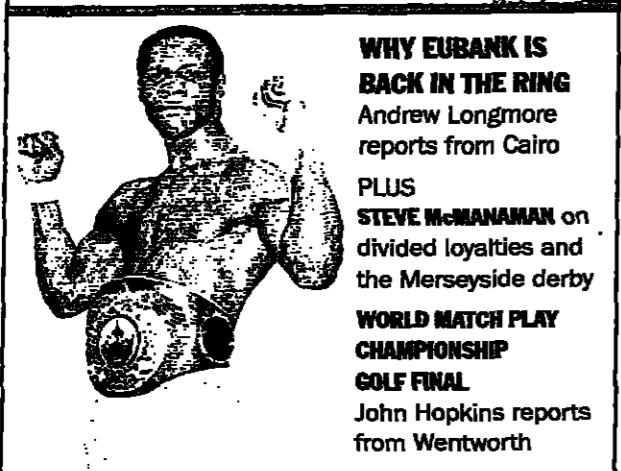
THE TIMES ON MONDAY

15 PAGES OF TIMES SPORT



**NEWCASTLE V
MANCHESTER
UNITED**

Rob Hughes
reports from St
James' Park



**WHY EUBANK IS
BACK IN THE RING**

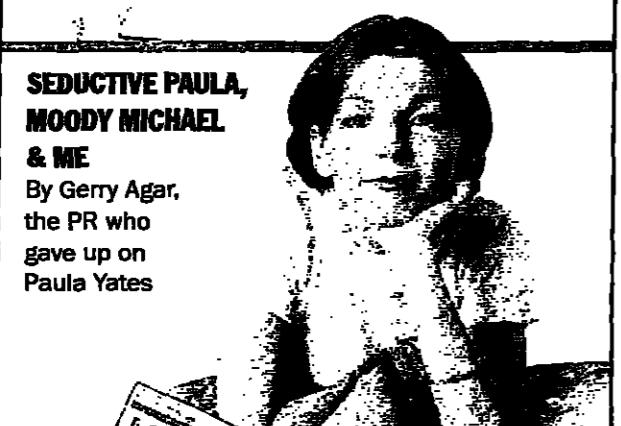
Andrew Longmore
reports from Cairo

PLUS
STEVE MCMANAMAN on
divided loyalties and
the Merseyside derby

**WORLD MATCH PLAY
CHAMPIONSHIP**

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John Hopkins reports
from Wentworth



**SEDUCTIVE PAULA,
MOODY MICHAEL
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By Gerry Agar,
the PR who
gave up on
Paula Yates



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£10,000 raised for woman in sperm case

Public rallies behind widow who wants baby

By EMMA WILKINS
AND ALICE THOMSON

DIANE BLOOD, the widow who is fighting for the right to bear her late husband's baby, said yesterday she had been overwhelmed by donations and messages of support from the public.

An appeal for money towards Mrs Blood's legal costs raised more than £10,000 by last night with donations from all over Great Britain and one from Switzerland. But Mrs Blood, 30, needs more than £10,000 to cover the costs of an appeal against a High Court ruling which bans her from using her husband Stephen's sperm to conceive by artificial insemination.

"I am getting tremendous support from the public and I want to thank everyone for the amazing response," Mrs Blood said. "I would just like people to help me because I am being stopped from having Stephen's baby by bureaucracy and red tape."

Mr Blood, who died aged 30 in March last year from bacterial meningitis, would have made a wonderful father, she said.

"He was brilliant with children. He loved spending time with his nephews and our friends' children, playing football, giving piggyback rides and messing about.

The reason that I fell in love with him was for his wonderful personality. I've never known anyone who had so many friends. No one disliked him. He was the most open, friendly and loving person. He would have been a wonderful father."

The couple, who lived in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, first met as teenagers at a friend's party. Stephen was her first boyfriend and they went out together for nine years before getting married in 1991.

Marriage was the logical conclusion of our relationship. He proposed when we were in the garden at my parents' house and he asked me if I would like to marry him the next year.

"It was always our plan to start a family and we had



Diane Blood: overwhelmed by money for legal costs and messages of support for her

discussed it before we got married. We both agreed it was something we wanted. We wouldn't have formed a relationship if we thought differently about something so fundamental," she said.

The High Court ruled on Thursday that Mrs Blood had

lawfully been denied the use of her husband's sperm by the Human Fertility and Embryology Authority because he had not given his written consent before he died. Mrs Blood was granted leave to appeal and the case will probably not be heard before

January next year. A powerful cross-bench alliance of Peers is considering introducing a backbench Bill which would allow widows such as Diane Blood to have children by their dead husbands. The Peers, led by fertility experts Lord Winston and Baroness Warnock, say that if Mrs Blood does not win her appeal then they want to act to change the "flawed" laws on human fertilisation.

Lord Winston, Professor of Fertility Studies at Westminster Hospital, yesterday said that Mrs Blood's case was by no means unique and it was unfair to prevent a husband and wife having a child after one spouse's death. He said: "The most obvious way to change the Bill would be to add 'normally' before the words requiring written consent."

Lord Winston said that he had been involved in at least one other recent case where a couple had been having fertility treatment and the husband had then gone into a coma after an accident. Mrs Blood could legally receive Mr Blood's kidneys, liver or cornea but not the child he wanted her to bear. Ironically she could be legally inseminated with sperm from a complete stranger, live or dead as long as there is written permission," Lord Winston said.

Joan Lester, the former Labour Cabinet minister, is prepared to help take the Bill through the Commons.

Peers are usually allowed a free vote on private members' bills but some rightwing Tory Peers have already made it known to the whips that they would not back any law that encouraged a child to be bought up in a one-parent family. Catholic Peers are also likely to feel strongly about any changes to a bill which most already oppose.

□ Donations can be made to The Stephen Blood Baby Appeal on 0121 643 4636.

RC 'minefield'

Continued from page 1
more relevant to the condition of contemporary society," according to the Right Rev David Konstant, Bishop of Leeds and chairman of the working group responsible for the document.

He is concerned to avoid "misrepresentations", he says. The Church has in the past been highly critical of the extremes of both socialism and capitalism and bishops are concerned that they are not seen as lending support to the Labour Party. While hardline Labour MPs have in the past tended to be atheists, that has changed over the past decade.

In a letter to the editors of all Catholic newspapers and journals, Bishop Konstant insists: "Our primary aim is to renew and reform Catholics of the Church's teaching in this area."

being party political. "You are no doubt aware that the Catholic bishops' conference has drawn up a statement outlining the principles of Catholic social teaching and applying them to contemporary society in the light of the forthcoming general election. This is the first venture of its kind, likely to attract considerable media interest," he says.

In an unusual attempt to forestall controversy, he continues: "I am confident that fair and comprehensive coverage of this statement in the Catholic press will help to offset any misinterpretations the statement may receive elsewhere." Bishop Konstant insists: "Our primary aim is to renew and reform Catholics of the Church's teaching in this area."

Bowls club turns down lottery cash

BY ROBIN YOUNG

THE members of a predominantly male bowls club have turned down £80,000 in lottery and council grants because they do not want to use the club's reserves for a new clubhouse which might attract more women.

A National Lottery grant of £52,000 to Stalybridge Bowls Club, near Manchester, for the renovation of its crumbling clubhouse was announced by Sir Bobby Charlton in March after the club changed its rules to allow women as voting members. The club was also to receive grants from a brewery and from Tameside council, totalling more than £30,000, but would have been left with £33,000 to find if plans to provide a new bar, lounge and indoor green were to be realised.

After six months' indecision, the club decided to go without the money. Its secretary, Eric Seville, has resigned in disgust. He said: "We have been working for this for two years and now it has all gone. The clubhouse is 100 years old and crumbling around members' cars. I cannot believe their decision."

Insurance boss cleared of sex bias

An insurance manager was cleared of hounding a female consultant who claimed that she forced him to leave her job. An industrial tribunal ruled Stewart Calderwood, of Bingham, Nottinghamshire, had not sexually discriminated against Melanie Murphy, who said she had been driven to a nervous breakdown by his intimidation and bullying.

Dorrell move on children's homes

Inspectors are to be allowed into smaller residential homes caring for children. Stephen Dorrell announced yesterday. The Health Secretary is closing a loophole in the law which exempted institutions with fewer than four children from the inspection regime. His announcement was made at the Association of Directors of Social Services' conference.

Dunblane parents may sue police

Dunblane parents may seek compensation from Central Scotland Police following Lord Cullen's damning criticism of the force and the subsequent resignation of a senior officer. Peter Watson, solicitor advocate representing all the families and the two surviving teachers, confirmed yesterday that he would be advising his clients.

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'He not only destroyed my family, he destroyed his future. My heart goes out to him'

Head's widow feels sorrow for killer



Frances Lawrence yesterday with her children Maroushka, 21, left, Lucien, 9, Unity, 15, and Myfanwy, 19. They discussed the verdict together. "It has been like a rite of passage"

SURROUNDED by photographs of her husband and four children, Philip Lawrence's widow spoke for the first time yesterday about the "nightmare" she feels that she has been living since his death.

Throughout the trial of her husband's killer, 16-year-old Learco Chindamo, Frances Lawrence maintained a dignified and composed presence at the back of the Old Bailey courtroom. Although the strain was reflected in an occasional haunted expression, her face betrayed little emotion, even when Chindamo was found guilty on Thursday of murder.

Mrs Lawrence said she had no hatred towards her husband's killer; instead she felt "overwhelming sadness" for him and his family. "Learco Chindamo killed my husband and, in doing so, he not only destroyed my family, he also destroyed his own future. My heart goes out to him and his family. I just feel overwhelming sadness that he has not known Philip."

"Philip might have given time and shown him a better way to live. He might have shown him that the meaning of happiness doesn't lie in the glitz amusement arcades that he spent his time in."

"I felt a great sadness for him and his lack of values and the lack of anything that shaped his life. People say that some lives are beyond redemption, but I do not believe that. If I did I think I would just feel like giving up completely."

She said that the point at which she felt most pity for Chindamo was when he was giving evidence. "When Learco was in the witness box, he described the minute details of his gang and how it worked. When he was talking about how he paid £3.60 to join, it just broke my heart that



Frances Lawrence says she has been living a nightmare since her husband's death. She talks to Joanna Bale about the impact of the murder upon her family

any child should find that the way to go forward.

The fact that, as my husband was dying, he was playing pool made me feel overwhelming sadness that he knew no more than that, that he thought that was the way to happiness, that he's never been taught or shown anything else."

As she spoke, her son Lucien, 9, wandered in and out of the room as if to check that his mother was all right. Soon after his father died last December, Lucien wrote to Father Christmas asking for his daddy back so that his mother and three sisters would stop crying.

Mrs Lawrence said that she had never tried to shield her son from the awful reality of his father's murder. He was with her at St Mary's Hospital, in Paddington, when she was told that her husband had died.

"He and I were the first people to know that Philip had died. He asked me where on his body his daddy had been stabbed and I said, 'In his heart.' He let out an ethereal wail and at that moment I felt he had gone from being a child who was nine to a child to an adult."

Unlike many nine-year-olds, Lucien dislikes violent cartoons and playthings such as Power Rangers, preferring to ride his bike or play with his new black-and-white kitten, which he has called Mandala.

"Until this happened he had

no experience of violence, which makes it particularly difficult to begin to tell him what it all means." Mrs Lawrence said. "I have told him everything, though. Children suffer if they are not told everything straight away and only find out afterwards."

Although Lucien is so young, he has taken a keen interest in his mother's attitude that some good could come out of his father's death. She said: "Lucien said to me this morning, 'We can't change what's happened in the past, but we can change the future.' That comes from a child who is even at nine has that kind of vision."

She said that many of her friends tried to protect her from the gruesome details of her husband's death by trying to persuade her not to attend the trial. "Philip's death is as important to me as his life. I wanted to know all about it. Many people tried to dissuade me from going to court, but it seemed to me that my place was there."

"There was no decision to make in my mind about it. I had heard all the details of Philip's death before the trial. I had a long talk with his surgeon and I also saw his body after he died."

"Even so, the whole thing has had the kind of consistency of a nightmare that I feel I will never wake up from. The trial was like watching a play, but at the same time being totally immersed in the characters and the plot."

Asked how she managed to retain her composure while listening to some of the evidence about her husband's death, she said: "Some feelings are too deep for tears."

She never doubted that Chindamo was the killer and said that she felt a sense of justice when the guilty verdict was delivered. "There was no pleasure to see a young life

locked away, but there was a sense of justice. I knew the police had the right man."

After the verdict she telephoned her children and spoke to each one separately. "I told them as it was almost in the way that the jury foreman had read out the verdicts on the three charges that were faced by Chindamo and his co-defendant. I then came home and we talked about it a little more. It has been like a rite of passage for all of us."

Mrs Lawrence is still having to live with the spectre of a

man who has been stalking her as she struggles to return to normality with her children. She said: "I am not terrified. It's just rather creepy and makes me feel uneasy. He has followed me to various places and I have seen him on several occasions. There have been no physical or verbal threats and the police are investigating."

She dismissed the incidents as unimportant compared to her husband's death. She added: "We are trying not to let it be a problem."

She plans to return next

term to teaching English at an independent school near her home in Ealing, west London. "I love teaching and I don't want to let my pupils down. I went back to school a few weeks after Philip died because I felt that it was the right thing to do."

"I hope that something can be done to stop society disintegrating the way it is. Both Philip and I discussed this before he died and I feel I should carry it on. He used to call us twin souls; we just knew that it was the right way to go about things."

TODAY IN THE TIMES
directory

Inside
The Directory,
our new
52-page
entertainment
guide:

- The best seven-day guide to television, satellite and radio

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- Books: six pages of weekend reading

PAGES 7-12

- Food: the low-fat cookery course

PAGES 3-6

- What's on and where: our critics' guide to going out this week

PAGES 13-22



Philip Lawrence and his killer, Learco Chindamo: "Philip might have shown him a better way to live"

Woman loses in strippogram case

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A WOMAN executive who claimed to have suffered post-traumatic stress disorder after colleagues at work arranged a male stripper on her birthday has lost her claim for unfair dismissal.

Gail Steele, 44, said she was shocked to have lost her claim against the optical care company Optika and was considering taking the case to appeal. She is already bringing a claim in the High Court next year for £320,000 damages, alleging wrongful dismissal, assault and false imprisonment by the stripper.

At the hearing earlier this year at Woburn Place industrial tribunal, central London, a psychiatrist said that Ms Steele had suffered emotional trauma similar to that suffered by the victims of rape or bomb blasts. The stripper arrived on her 43rd birthday and pretended to be a job applicant. When Ms Steele – who earned £60,000 as the only senior woman director with the company – sat down, he leaned over and handcuffed her wrists to the desk.

She said he produced a truncheon and baby oil and, as the all-male group jeered,

Gascoigne saw red after row

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

PAUL GASCOIGNE yesterday blamed his violent argument with his wife Sheryl for his performance on the football pitch during Rangers' clash with Ajax, when he was sent off for kicking another player.

In an oblique reference that appeared to confirm reports that they had had a fight, the England and Rangers mid-field star said he had taken the "memory of Sunday night" on to the pitch with him on Wednesday night.

It has been alleged that Gascoigne attacked his wife during an argument while they were staying at the Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire. Pictures of Mrs Gascoigne, with a bruised face, arm in a sling and bandaged hand, appeared in the *Daily Mirror* on Thursday.

Yesterday, Gascoigne, 29, returned alone to his home outside Glasgow, after training all day. It was not clear whether Mrs Gascoigne, 31, was also there. The recently married couple were said to have met on Thursday night, to try to salvage their five-year relationship.

Yesterday, Mel Stein, Gas-



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Young motorist fights for life in hospital after his car is 'bombed' with 50lb block from bridge

Driver injured as vandals hurl concrete on motorway

BY LIN JENKINS

A MOTORIST who was critically injured by a concrete block hurled from a motorway bridge was fighting for his life last night.

Simon Willmott was driving at 70mph when the 50lb block smashed through his windscreen, hit him on the head and crushed his chest. He managed to stop the car before he blacked out.

Poole said a youth, or gang of youths, had thrown the block off the bridge over the M3 near Oldham, Hampshire. The crime was being treated as attempted murder. Officers believe the same people could have been responsible for a number of similar incidents in recent weeks when missiles have been hurled off the bridge into the traffic below.

Mr Willmott, 22, of Bagshot, Surrey, was unconscious in intensive care at Frimley Park Hospital, Camberley. His condition was described as critical but stable and his parents Alan and Sandra Willmott and his girlfriend Laura were at his bedside.

His sister Julie Brookbank, 25, said she regarded those responsible for such a wanton act as mindless and sick. "It is just your worst nightmare and it is so needless. Nobody in any right mind would do that sort of thing."

She said that the family were hoping that his youth would aid his recovery. "He is young and strong and very determined."

His mother said: "He has got awful injuries to his chest, as his lungs has collapsed and there



The bridge over the M3 from which the concrete was hurled



The 50lb block crashed through the windscreen of the car

are problems with his heart. We have been told the next 48 hours are going to be critical."

Superintendent Richard Stowe said that hurling a concrete block from a bridge showed a complete disregard for human life. "It was utterly reckless and crass stupidity."

Mr Willmott was travelling home on his own from Bourne-

mouth, Dorset, where he works as an account executive for the cable company Nynex, at around 8pm in moderately heavy traffic when the concrete smashed through his windscreen. The 1ft by 6in block had been hurled from a height of 22 feet.

The car stopped around 320 yards from the bridge. "The fact that he was not killed is down to the skill of his driving," said Superintendent Stowe. "Somehow he managed to bring the car to a halt in the fast lane."

"God knows how he did it because by the time the first person got to the car he was unconscious, so it was a tremendous piece of driving to bring the car under control. He didn't skid and he didn't hit the crash barrier."

He appealed to anybody who had seen people on the bridge to come forward. "Whoever threw the concrete off can't have known who it would have hit. It was pitch black and they would have had no idea where it was going."

A driver from Essex reported a similar incident yesterday which happened last week. He was passing under the same bridge when the bonnet of his car was struck by a missile. He escaped injury and did not tell police until he heard that it had happened again with serious consequences. Detective Chief Inspector John James said it appeared there had been a number of similar incidents at the bridge.

The motorway was closed for nine hours to allow police to study the scene and search for evidence. It remained closed during the rush

hour yesterday morning, reopening at 10am.

Mrs Brookbank, of Hove, Sussex, said the family was devastated

by the crime. "What they did was sick, beyond comprehension. I hope they catch them and charge them with attempted murder because that's what they did —

tried to murder him."

Mr Willmott said: "Our son could lose his life because of their stupidity."

Detectives later revealed that a person, thought to be a juvenile, had been arrested and was helping police with their inquiries.

In 1984 taxi driver David Wilkie

was killed while driving miner

David Williams to work during the miners' strike. Russell Shanks and Dean Hancock hurled a concrete block off a road bridge which hit the car, killing Mr Wilkie. They were convicted of murder but it was reduced to manslaughter on appeal and sentenced to eight years in prison.



Victim Simon Willmott, who has head and chest injuries after being hit at 70mph

Public school pupils call for head's reinstatement

BY RUSSELL JENKINS

PUPILS at Cheltenham College campaigned yesterday for governors to reinstate their headmaster, Peter Wilkes. He has been forced to resign after disappointing examination results.

Pupils at the independent school in Gloucestershire organised posters and petitions and threatened classroom sit-ins and walkouts. One poster says: "Peter Wilkes — We Say He Stays" and another declares: "If he goes, we go — Peter Wilkes, the pupils' choice".

Mr Wilkes' resignation after seven years was announced last week by the college council, which said that a new head was needed to carry the school into the next century. Mr Wilkes, who is to remain until the end of the academic year, refused to speak about his departure.

A-level scores tell this year while those of rival schools

increased. Mr Wilkes's wife, Alice, who is a teacher, has said publicly that her husband has been the victim of examination league tables. But she said the tables concealed the fact that 20 of the college's pupils gained Oxbridge places this year. Forty-six per cent of GCSE results were A or A* and this year's A-level results were the third best in Cheltenham's history, she said.

Her husband announced this year that the 600-pupil school, founded in 1841 and with fees for boarders of £12,000 a year, was to become co-educational.

Air Commodore David Atherton, the school secretary, said of the pupils' campaign: "It is a genuine expression of affection for him and general dismay that he and the council have agreed that he should leave at the end of this year."

Mark Hicks-Beach, a school parent of Great Witcombe,

another parent said that the pupils were threatening sit-ins and walkouts because they thought that the headmaster could hardly punish them for trying to get him reinstated.

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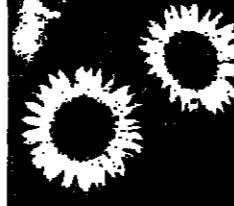
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Police can arrest after two claims of harassment

Stalkers face five years' jail in legal crackdown

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

STALKERS will face jail terms of up to five years under proposals announced by the Government yesterday.

Two new criminal offences would be created and people would be liable to arrest and prosecution after frightening or harassing their victims just twice. Under both offences it would not be necessary for the prosecution to prove that the stalker intended to frighten or distress the victim. It would have to prove only that the activities were intentional or that a reasonable person would realise that they frightened, harassed, alarmed or distressed the victim.

The police would have the power to search a suspected stalker's property, without a warrant, for evidence such as letters, photographs and videotapes. Victims of racial harassment and nuisance neighbours would also benefit from the proposed measures.

Ministers intend that the proposals should form the basis of a Private Member's Bill and hope that they will become law by early next year.

The measures are a considerable toughening of original Home Office plans, published three months ago. David Maclean, a junior Home Office minister, said: "We believe that this proposed Bill will form a formidable weapon against stalkers and finally provide victims with hope that, in the future, they will be able to live their lives free of intimidation and fear."

The proposals involve both the civil and criminal law, with prison sentences and fines for those convicted of stalking. The first new criminal offence involves the use of words or behaviour on more



Tracey Sant, whose stalker was jailed for three years. She welcomed the proposals

than one occasion which puts a person in fear of violence. It would carry a five-year prison sentence or an unlimited fine.

A second offence would involve the use of words or behaviour on more than one occasion "which would cause the victim to be harassed, alarmed or distressed". It would carry a maximum prison sentence of six months and/or a £5,000 fine. A new

civil injunction would operate where words or behaviour are used on more than one occasion which cause a victim to be distressed or alarmed. Anyone breaching the order would be committing a criminal offence carrying a maximum prison sentence of five years and an unlimited fine.

The Government has acted after a series of high-profile cases. Last month Dennis

Chambers, 37, was acquitted of causing grievous bodily harm to Margaret Bent, a 30-year-old cafe manager, who claimed that he took over her life by following her and bombarding her with telephone calls.

Also last month, Clarence Morris, 37, was found guilty of causing actual bodily harm to Perry Southall, 20, a dental nurse who was subjected to a campaign of intimidation that involved 200 incidents in eight months. In March, Anthony Burstow, 36, a Falklands veteran, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for causing grievous bodily harm to Tracey Sant, 28, during three years of harassment. Ms Sant said yesterday: "I am happy to hear that finally victims are going to have a light at the end of the tunnel. Nobody understands what being stalked is like unless they go through it. I was told just to ignore it and he would go away. But they don't go away."

Most victims of stalkers are women. A recent study of 155 cases found that 144 victims were female and ten were male. The other case involved an entire family.

The study identified five categories of stalker. In 40 of the cases the stalker was a neighbour or casual friend, 30 involved a formerly intimate relationship, 25 a former domestic partner and 24 a work colleague. In 32 cases the stalker was unknown to the victim.

In each case the initial trigger was either the ending of a relationship or an innocent and platonic encounter. There was no evidence that any of the victims could be considered to have brought the stalking upon themselves.

Leading article, page 23

Curb could hit journalists' inquiries

By CAROL MIDGLEY

JOURNALISTS, debt collectors and Jehovah's Witnesses could all fall foul of the legislation, it was claimed yesterday.

Concern centres on the second of the two new criminal offences. A maximum penalty of six months' jail, a £5,000 fine, or both, could be applied to anyone using "words or behaviour, on more than one occasion, which would cause the victim to be harassed, alarmed or distressed, either

intentionally or in circumstances where a reasonable person would have realised this would be the effect".

The Home Office admitted that this could lead to the arrest of journalists involved in investigating the activities of people who did not want the attention. The proposals include a defence of acting reasonably and necessarily in pursuit of business, trade or profession.

However, Sandra Rasaiah, of the Newspaper Society, said that if a person

subjected to unwanted, but legitimate, media attention sent a circular to media companies instructing them not to contact or photograph them, or to desist from an investigation, that would establish grounds for legal action. Ignoring the instruction could make a journalist liable to immediate arrest. "Although we can quite understand the target, our concern is that this should not be open to exploitation and manipulation to centre on an unintended target."

Strikes put 30,000 jobs at risk, says Post Office

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

ANOTHER suspension of the Royal Mail's monopoly because of further strikes could put 30,000 jobs at risk, the Post Office has told MPs.

The warning came in a memo to MPs on the Trade and Industry Select Committee which has been leaked as the Communication Workers' Union ballots its members on whether to accept an offer previously rejected by the union executive or to resume industrial action.

The Post Office said the forecast was based on the loss of market share to competitors who offered services for business users in the Midlands during the last one-month suspension of the monopoly. The Government has said it will suspend the monopoly for three months if there are further strikes. A spokesman for the Post Office conceded that 30,000 was the estimated figure for job losses if the monopoly was broken for more than three months. The union dismissed the Post Office's leaked warning as a scare tactic.

Duchess of York loses her flag day

By ROBIN YOUNG

A COUNCIL which raised the Union Jack to honour the Duchess of York's 37th birthday hauled it down again after Buckingham Palace pointed out that she was no longer royal.

The flag flew from the Ivybridge, Devon, town hall for four hours on Tuesday because the Duchess's name was on a Royal British Legion list of royals who deserved recognition. The council checked with the Palace when some Legion members complained that she was unsuitable to be honoured.

The town clerk, Donald Hellings, said: "We always put up the flag for official occasions. We felt that she was still the Duchess of York so she was still entitled to the flag. However, we had a couple of complaints so in the end we rang Buckingham Palace. They told us we could fly the flag, but did not have to. We will be checking with the British Legion whether they suggest we fly the flag for the Duchess's birthday in future."

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Latest republican film hands IRA another transatlantic victory on propaganda front

Big Apple takes a bite out of the beastly British

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN EAST HAMPTON, LONG ISLAND

A SECOND salvo of Irish republican hero-making struck the United States on Wednesday night in genteel Long Island, where a cinematic saga about the H-block hunger strikers opened the Hamptons Film Festival to applause and Brit-bashing. The film arrived a week after the opening of Hollywood's *Michael Collins*.

Some Mother's Son, which tells one side of the story of Bobby Sands and his fellow prisoners, was more subtle than the second-phase booby trap bomb the IRA exploded last week in Lisburn. Co Antrim, but the damage it could inflict on British interests may be greater. The Film Festival, whose patrons include the director Steven Spielberg and the actor Roy Scheider, was happy to oblige a film which even its director Terry George, a former republican prisoner, recognises as being biased.

During the screening, audience members thrilled to the whirl of Irish dance music as IRA gunmen attacked British soldiers. They tut-tutted when



Pataki: compared famine to Holocaust



Maginnis: spoke of a propaganda war

British characters said that terrorists were murderers, not prisoners of war. When 1981 footage of an unyielding Margaret Thatcher was used, a person behind me exhaled loudly to express disapproval. When Pro supporters verbally attacked a pacifist Mother Superior, there came sniggers.

The film — an award-winner at the Edinburgh Festival — dwells on the foul-smelling conditions in Maze Prison during the Eighties' "dirty protest". In the East Hampton picture house, the reek was of Arpège, Guerlain — and a dash of prejudice.

Sponsors for the opening night of the festival included Evin, American Express, *The New York Times* and the once British-owned car company Jaguar. At the end of the screening, the Calvin Klein-clad bourgeoisie of East Hampton, a cocoon of wealth two hours' drive from New York city, discussed the film. Four 50-something women, prosperous in appearance, attacked all things British.

"Those bloody British," said one, spitting out the Anglism. "I do hate them a lot," agreed another, loudly. "And to think it happened just a few years ago. God, I hate Thatcher."

Juliene Scanlon, a voluntary worker of Hungarian descent from Sag Harbour, showed no embarrassment about her anti-Britishness. "The truth will out," she said. "I hated Thatcher and I hate Major." Earlier, before she heard my own English accent, she had attacked "the way they speak, the way they act — I hate them".

The release of *Some Mother's Son*, and *Michael Collins*, about the early IRA, coincides with a discernible rise in anti-British sentiment in New York. Last week the state governor, George Pataki, compared British officialdom's behaviour during the Irish potato famine to Nazi conduct during the Holocaust. An opinion-forming weekly, the *New York Observer*, published a vitriolic article which complained about the handful of magazine editors who have moved from London to Manhattan. It said: "This city's cultural elite is infested with Anglo imports on a mission to drive down the American IQ and thus exact revenge for the Empire's disintegration into worldwide influence of Icelandic proportions."

New York media references

to the Royal Family are increasingly abusive, perceptions of British society are out of date and the British (specifically, English) character is insulted in a way that would not, in this city so finely attuned to defamation, be tolerated by other cultures. The level of abuse seems higher than that of the mindless anti-Americanism in London in the Seventies and Eighties.

Ken Maginnis, a Unionist MP, said recently that "the IRA has lost the shooting war and now they are going all-out to win the propaganda war". Long Island saw that war's Western front, in the raw.

Some Mother's Son is one of four films about the Northern Irish Troubles in the Hamptons Festival. Film festival organisers like controversy,

no matter the price in terms of balance or the sensitivity of timing over political developments. "I had no doubt about releasing this film," said Ken Tabachnick, the festival's executive director. Ed Burke, one

of the film's producers, pointed out that "the only group that does any killing in the film is the IRA" and the movie's British star, the left-of-centre Helen Mirren, said that it was about "the appalling

dilemmas" that faced the hunger strikers' mothers. The film is certainly an adroit piece of work and is careful to carry some balance, but in gut it is pro-IRA. If it was about the mothers and not their gun-

toting sons, should it not have been titled *Some Son's Mother*?

As he took plaudits from the expensively cushioned Hamptons swells, Belfast-born Terry George said of his film: "It's

only one side of the story." Alas, at a time that the IRA's support in America might finally have been on the slide, it is the only side of the Troubles that most Americans will get to see.



Helen Mirren as Kathleen Quigley, a mother comforting her republican son dying of starvation during a hunger strike in the Maze prison

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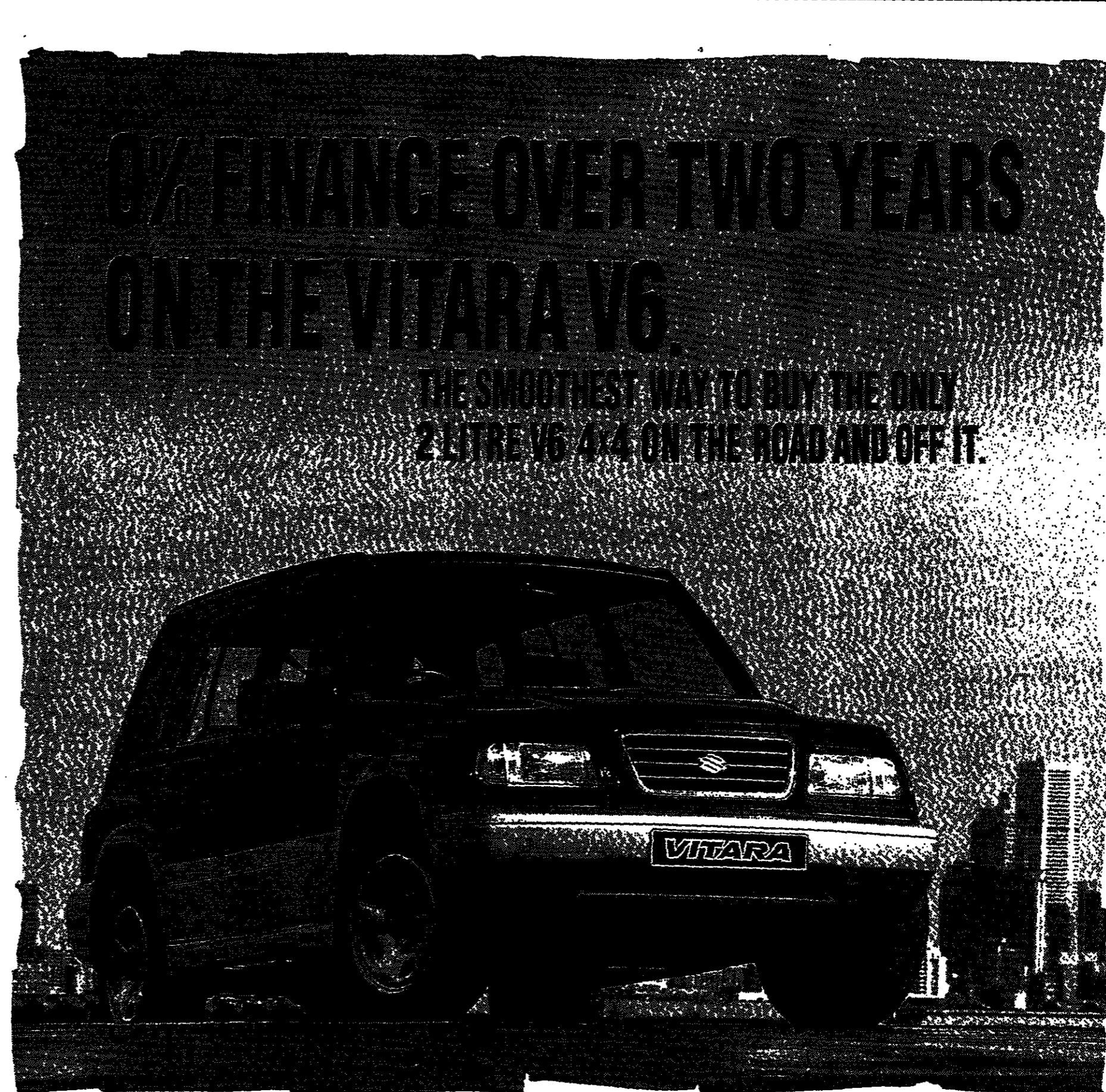
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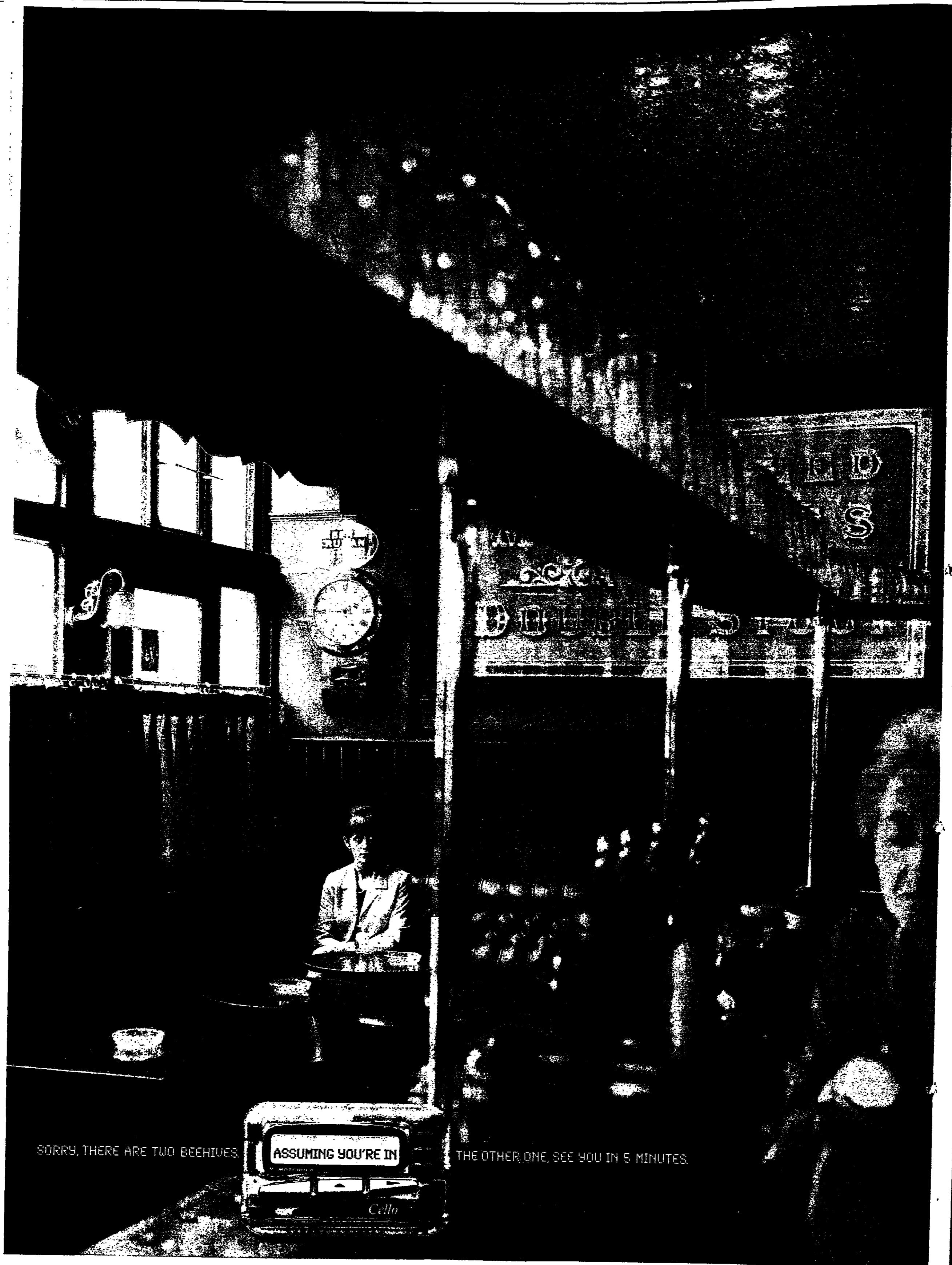
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مكتبة من الأصل

Her last launch was a liner but Her Majesty was as happy to make a small cruiser go with a big splash

By BILL FRONT

IT was not the usual royal launching. Despite its illustrious-sounding name, the *Millennium of London* was not heading for life on the ocean waves. It will go little further than a mile along the Thames.

But cut-glass accents and estuary English cohabited happily yesterday when the Queen launched a passenger boat for an illustrious East End millionaire. It was the smallest vessel ever blessed by the sovereign.

The boat's owner, Gary Beckwith, a former market trader who cannot read or write, said: "This was the greatest day of my life. She knew we were all nervous and made it very easy for us. She was very gracious."

The staunch royalist from Leyton, east London, hit upon the idea of asking the Queen to launch his 11th boat while it was being built at a Welsh shipyard. However, his "difficulties with words" prevented him from writing to Buckingham Palace.

Paul Wilson, his friend and fellow director of City Cruises, put down in writing what he wanted to say and a reply came back from Buckingham Palace saying the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were delighted to accept the invitation.

The Queen's last ship launch, in April 1995, was P&O's giant cruise liner *MV Oriana*, 260 metres long, weighing 69,153 tonnes, and carrying about 2,000 passengers across the seas. The *Millennium* is 30.7 metres long, 85 tonnes, and will carry up to 400 passengers along the river between the Tower and Westminster.

After the launching at a pier below the Tower, Mr Beckwith, 44, said he revered the Queen "from a personal and business point of view". He added: "Let's face it, most visitors to London come because of the Royal Family. I would like to thank her and the Duke of Edinburgh for coming. They are welcome

back aboard anytime. When I was a boy, I always wanted to meet the Queen. This is the crowning of an unusual business career."

After a childhood of poverty and illiteracy, Mr Beckwith worked variously as an underwear salesman, milkman, bookmaker's clerk and croupier before launching his pleasure-boat company, based at a floating office in south-east London. He knows the operating area well — he fished the same stretch of the Thames as a boy.

His business is now said to be worth £5 million and he has a yellow Rolls-Royce. Among his customers are many of London's Asian community, who hire his boats to scatter the ashes of the departed on the water.

The Queen's other previous launches include the warships *HMS Invincible*, and *HMS Sheffield* — sunk during the Falklands War — plus the QE2, the Royal Yacht *Britannia* and the nuclear submarine *HMS Dreadnought*.



The Queen is introduced to former market trader Gary Beckwith as she launches London's latest passenger boat

Cannon is latest shot at leaves on line

By NICK NUTTALL

A NEW weapon against the railways' most celebrated excuse for a delay, leaves on the line, is undergoing tests between Salisbury and Exeter.

Staff at Railtrack have fitted out a small locomotive with an advanced water cannon so powerful that its jet can cut through wood. Engineers hope the leaf-blasting loco, which is being tested at night, will end their annual embarrassment of delayed trains as wheels skid and slip on rails coated in crushed, fallen leaves.

Along with the other legendary excuse, "the wrong kind of snow", leaves on the line cost more than £10 million a year in damaged trains and rails.

Bev Whitty of Railtrack said yesterday: "Leaves have long been the butt of railway jokes. But they affect trains' ability to accelerate and, in some cases, stop safely. The trial aims to change all that."

Water cannon have been tried before in the long and sorry saga of tackling leaves on the line. But the previous attempt, a few years ago, failed because the pressure of the jets was too weak and the system could operate at only 5 mph.

Other ideas studied by British Rail in the past include putting rails in water troughs at notorious leaf blackspots; stunting trees by suppressing leaf formation; special leaf fences; using a Swedish scrubber train with wire brushes; and "aerodynamic leaf deflectors". A "plasma torch treatment train", which tried to burn leaves and mulch, was tested in Kent but abandoned.

The new French-built cannon on trial delivers a blast of 1,000 bar and the train can whip along at 35mph. Early findings indicate that the pressure is enough to lift the most stubborn leaves. Officials believe the system will be superior to the ageing fleet of special trains that spray a sticky goo onto rails to reduce the risk of wheel slip.

During the age of steam, sparks from the boiler would often ignite fallen leaves and nearby trees alleviating the threat. Cutting back trees is often unpopular among householders whose homes overlook the line.

Court puts stop to melody that lingered on

A woman whose obsessive playing of *Unchained Melody* made her neighbours' lives a misery was ordered to leave her council home in Camden, north London. Joan Lowe, 34, continued to hold drunken parties into the early hours of the morning in spite of several police warnings. A neighbour told London County Court: "That blasted song was played again and again until two or three in the morning."

Judge halts strike

A four-day strike by 1,200 staff at Newcastle City Health NHS Trust was called off after managers obtained a High Court injunction. Union called the strike, which was due to start on Monday, after the breakdown of pay talks last month.

Cranberries off

The Cranberries rock group have called off a 37-date European tour because the singer, Dolores O'Riordan, is ill. Miss O'Riordan, 23, apologised to fans for cancelling because of a leg injury, complicated by the stress of travelling and performing.

Hammer attack

Anthony Gomm, 27, who blinded a girl aged 16 in one eye by hurling a hammer through a car window, was jailed for three years. Gomm, who admitted causing a danger to road users, he had intended to hit the car.

Nice surprise

A man has just discovered he won £340,000 last Saturday. Brian Greene, 40, a hotel chef from Birmingham, places a £1 each-way accumulator bet every Saturday. He thought he had backed a horse that lost, but in fact he had backed a winner.

Escapes inquiry

Sir Anthony Grant, the MP for Cambridgeshire South-West, has called for an inquiry after a murderer and another violent patient escaped from Knebworth House psychiatric hospital in Cambridgeshire, scene of five escapes in two months.

Top scorers

The bat used by Jack Hobbs to score his 126th century and beat W.G. Grace's record in 1925 has been sold for £10,350, four times the estimate. The buyer also paid £1,500 for the bat with which Wally Hammond made his first county century.

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*Source: Hindsight, UK Growth & Income Sector and Gilt and Fixed Interest Sector. Figures calculated on a monthly basis from launch to 30.9.96, on an offer to bid price basis with net income reinvested.

**Source: The Exchange, 11.10.96.

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LEAVING TOO MUCH MONEY IN ORDINARY SAVINGS ACCOUNT DOES LITTLE FOR SAVINGS.

See page 37

Hartlepool is Britain's top new attraction in £1 billion boom year for tourism

Town that discovered the quay to fortune

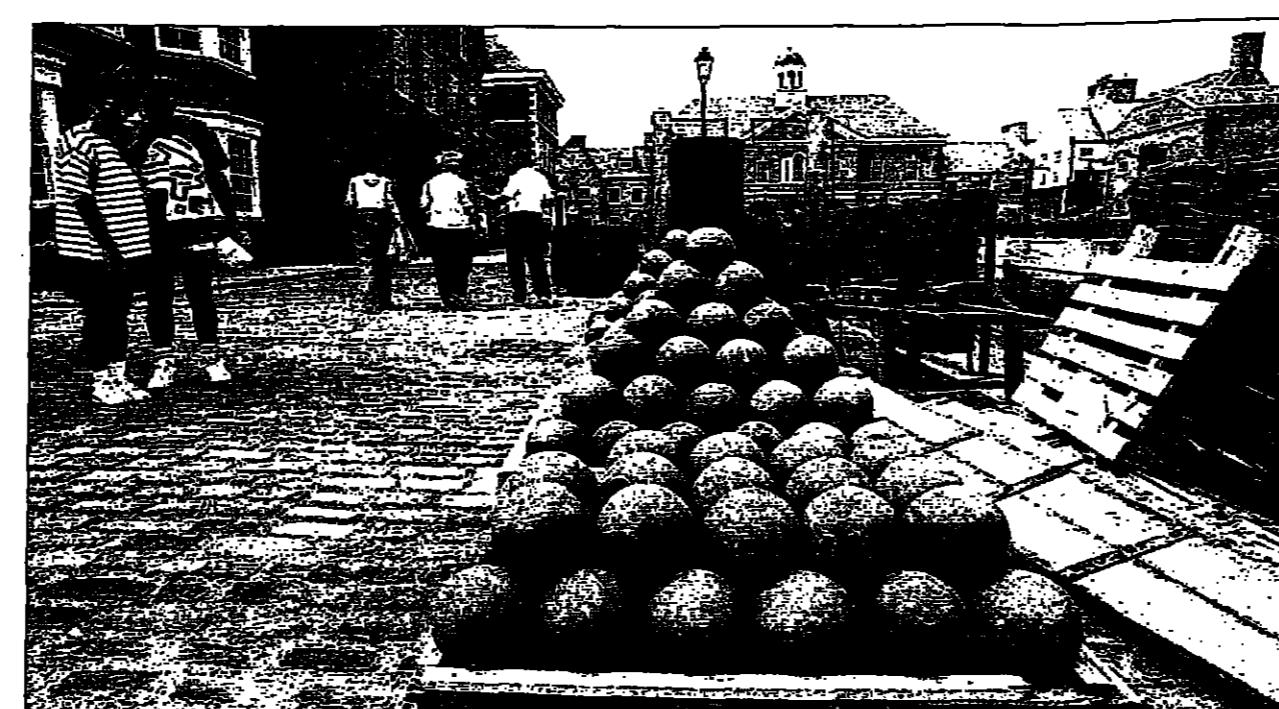
BY HARVEY ELLIOTT, TRAVEL CORRESPONDENT

An old north-east dockyard which found fresh life as a museum was named yesterday as the nation's most successful new tourist attraction, in a year when Britain's search for days out broke all records.

The Museum of Hartlepool was visited by 210,000 people in its first 12 months – twice the population of the town itself. Across the country, the amount spent by visitors to Britain's total of 5.88 tourist attractions went up last year by 6 per cent to a record £1.1 billion.

Entry to the £4 million Museum of Hartlepool is free, but the local authority says that the whole town benefits from the income provided by tourists. The museum was built on an old quayside area of the town and now houses a collection of fishing boats and a paddle steamer.

"The success is phenomenal," museum officer Gary Topp said. "At least 6 per cent of the visitors are foreigners.



Visitors on the dockside at Hartlepool and, below, signs of the changing times at the £4 million museum

per cent of the total number were children. An estimated 89,000 people are employed at the attractions, together with a further 56,000 volunteers.

The report is based on returns from what the tourist boards officially regard as "attractions" – places which people would be prepared to pay to visit even if in fact they were not charged to do so.

The top 20 attractions which charged for admission in 1995 were: 1. Alton Towers, Staffordshire 2,070,000; 2. Madame Tussauds, London 1,703,283; 3. Tower of London 2,536,680; 4. Chessington

World of Adventures 1,770,000; 5. Science Museum, London 1,556,368; 6. St Paul's Cathedral 1,500,000; 7. Natural History Museum, London 1,442,591; 8. Windsor Castle 1,212,305; 9. Blackpool Tower 1,205,000; 10. Thorpe Park, Surrey 1,166,000; 11. Kew Gardens 1,060,000; 12. Wimborne Lake Cruises 1,054,414; 13. London Zoo 1,042,701; 14. Edinburgh Castle 1,037,788; 15. Drayton Manor Park, Tamworth, Staffs 1,000,000; 16. Royal Academy, London 881,000; 17. Roman Baths, Bath 872,915; 18. Warwick

Castle 803,000; 19. Chester Zoo 760,580; 20. Granada Studios 750,000.

The top ten free attractions were: 1. Blackpool Pleasure Beach 7,300,000; 2. British Museum 5,745,866; 3. National Gallery, London 4,469,019; 4. Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell 4,150,000; 5. Palace Pier, Brighton 3,800,000; 6. Funland and Laserbowl, London 2,500,000; 7. Eastbourne Pier 2,300,000; 8. Westminster Abbey 2,245,000; 9. Pleasure Beach, Great Yarmouth 2,000,000; 10. York Minster 2,000,000.

Vale of tears that leads to redemption

John Haldane

LIFE is often hard. People act badly, hopes are dashed, tragedies occur. Gaudy though they may be, the television simulacra for evil pale by comparison with the thing itself, precisely because they are not real. A bleeding nose is more disturbing than a studio killing. When blood is drawn life flows away, and every day much blood and many lives are lost.

Each sunrise heralds a procession of betrayals, cruelties and disappointments. Parents struggle with the fact of their children's handicaps; friends and spouses continue long-established patterns of deceit the sick and the old worry about living and about dying. We stumble and stagger on towards death.

What does religion have to say about these facts? So far as the Roman Catholic tradition is concerned, it emphasises the sacrifice of Calvary and affirms its continuing redemptive function. In the offertory of the Mass the participants transcend earthly space and time and enter into a sacred dimension in which Christ's sacrifice stands before God as an atonement for human failing. That is one mystery; here is a second, reaffirmed in the experience of the great spiritual writers: God permits us to conjoin our suffering to that of Christ as part of his redemptive act.

That cannot mean that Christ's passion is of itself insufficient; rather it is as if by courtesy of the main parties one becomes associated with a wonderful gift and thereby is a co-recipient of gratitude. Wittgenstein, the greatest philosopher of this century, once wrote: "The only life that is happy is the life that can renounce the amenities of the world." His point is not that one should as a matter of fact, or of principle, renounce comfort; but that one should be disposed to equanimity in its absence.

However, although he was baptised a Catholic and received instruction in the faith, Wittgenstein's "spirituality" is more stoical than Christian. His

recommendation of renunciation belongs in the tradition of philosophies of detachment familiar from the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and from the teachings of the Buddha.

Wittgenstein says: "Learn to be content." Christ teaches us to pray to the Father: "Thy will be done... but deliver us from evil." The evil in question is not suffering but sin. The *Pater Noster* ends not with a request to be spared discomfort and death but with a plea to be freed from the influence of moral corruption.

The difference between the spirituality of stoicism and of Christianity flows from the latter's doctrines of creation, fall and redemption. God made the world in which we suffer. He did not cause that suffering, yet He permits it. Part of the explanation is that suffering is an occasion for spiritual growth.

Catholic doctrine does more than identify this world as a "vale of tears"; it insists that God entered into the condition of His creation and thus suffered with and on behalf of it. This is the ultimate demonstration of the justice of God: that He elects to endure whatever pain his creatures may suffer and cause.

In his work of spiritual direction, *The Journey of the Soul to God*, St Bonaventure writes: "Divine aid is at hand for all who seek it with a truly humble and devout heart, by sighing for it in this vale of tears by fervent prayer."

The teaching of the great spiritual writers is constant: those who live in the presence of Christ will die with God and those who die with God will live forever. We can enter into the divine presence by prayer and the sacrifice of the Mass, but a tangible symbol of that presence is a crucifix. I pray that when I die one will be on my person if not in my hand.

□ John Haldane is Professor of Philosophy in the University of St Andrews.

At your Service, Weekend, page II

10/10/96

THE TIMES SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

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Wet weekend forecast for Brighton as internal storms threaten to erode Goldsmith's European beachhead

Santer rebuffs Sir James over call for debate

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

JACQUES SANTER yesterday brushed off Sir James Goldsmith's challenge to debate with him Britain's place in Europe and suggested that the financier put his case in the European Parliament.

"As President of the European Commission, I am not at the beck and call of billionaire Goldsmith," M Santer said in a written statement. "Sir James is an eminent member of the directly elected European Parliament. This is the best forum for a democratic debate on European questions," he said.

He noted that Sir James, who, as an MEP for France, has one of the poorest attendance records at the Strasbourg assembly, had failed to take part in a debate on the state of the European Union last month. "He has another good opportunity next week when the European Parliament will discuss the political programme for 1997. I suggest he makes good use of this."

Sir James financed and was elected as an MEP for the Europe of Nations group in the 1994 European elections. The group, which includes Philippe de Villiers, a nationalist candidate in last year's French presidential election, is committed to the anti-Maastricht cause.

The financier issued his challenge to a live television debate in his latest full-page newspaper advertisement for the Referendum Party yesterday. He was responding to an attack by the Commission on an earlier advertisement which claimed that Britain was really governed by the 20 European Commissioners in Brussels.

The Commission ridiculed the claim as showing ignorance of the way the EU worked. EU laws are enacted by the council of member governments, not by the Commission, it pointed out.

A spokesman for M Santer added yesterday: "If Mr Goldsmith thinks that the Commission has too much power, it is the kind of remark that should be made in the European Parliament."

Sir Leon Brittan, the senior British EU Commissioner, said yesterday that it would be "plain daft" for Britain to exclude itself from monetary union now and throw away the right to take part in decisions for setting up the single currency. In a speech in Leeds, he attacked Tory Eurosceptics for renewing their demands to rule out British entry.

"The case for leaving the question open and being taken seriously at the negotiating table has become stronger than ever," he said.



Sir James Goldsmith arriving in Brighton yesterday for his party conference

Major admits size of deficit is a 'blot on the horizon'

BY PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

JOHN MAJOR admitted yesterday that the Government's high borrowing was a "blot" on the economic horizon, the clearest pointer so far that he accepts substantial tax cuts will be impossible to achieve in the November Budget.

The Prime Minister's public acknowledgement that the state of government debt was "a problem" follows an even bleaker private assessment by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, at Thursday's Cabinet meeting. As Mr Clarke called his Treasury team together for weekend talks at Dorneywood, his official country residence, it emerged that he had warned Cabinet colleagues that his options were severely circumscribed both by the size of the deficit and the demands on spending budgets.

With ministers anxious to avoid pre-election rows over cuts, the Chancellor is understood to believe that only

modest reductions in the levels of public spending planned a year ago can be contemplated. That will disappoint the Tory Right, which has been pressing for heavy cuts to fund a pre-election tax bonanza.

The Downing Street gathering is expected to conclude that it is probably the most that Mr Clarke will be able to afford to knock off income tax. He has told colleagues that he cannot take risks with the financial allocations to schools and the health service in the run-up to the election.

Amid indications that discussions within the Cabinet's EDX spending committee have become tense and difficult, Mr Clarke's warning to the Cabinet during a general discussion about the economy was said to have been firm. The BSE crisis had had a big impact on his room for manoeuvre, he said. It has already taken £1 billion off this

year's spending contingency reserve and will take at least another £1 billion next year.

Lower tax revenues have meant that Mr Clarke's hopes of cutting the budget deficit this year have not been realised. The deficit in the first six months of the financial year was £19.8 billion, after removing privatisation proceeds, compared with £20.1 billion last year.

Although Mr Major delivered an optimistic message about the overall state of the economy during talks with businessmen yesterday, he made plain that he would not take any short-term risks that might fuel a revival of inflation.

He said that inflation was "as much under lock and key as I can ever remember it". But he then added: "The only economic blot on the horizon is the size of the fiscal deficit. That is a problem."

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Telecommunications technology? That was easy. Merseyside has just about the most advanced system in Europe, and with the telecom-trained staff to go with it.

But it was the staff of the Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance that tipped the balance. Not just their skills, but their attitude.

Every staff member on the Motability project went on a disability awareness course (which included negotiating Liverpool City Centre in a wheelchair) to give them the right level of understanding when talking directly on the phone to a disabled claimant, co-ordinating things like garage repairs and emergency transport.

"For Motability, fully comprehensive meant more than just policy cover - it meant handling the special needs of disabled drivers. Our Merseyside staff rose to that challenge."

Adaptability and enthusiasm have been the watchwords of Merseyside for a generation. The clerical skills developed by companies like Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance and Littlewoods 20 years ago are now the telephone skills of today's generation using state-of-the-art equipment.

And look at some of the other companies investing on Merseyside: Kodak, Ford, Barclays and oil and gas exploration company, BHP.

Of course they're here for the technology. Of course they're here for the low operational costs, site availability, grants and assistance, training and two world class universities.

But in the end what makes Merseyside truly unique is the element that swayed Motability. The premium difference was the people.

Disharmony as key players abandon one-man band

BY ALICE THOMSON AND PHILIP WEBSTER

DESERTIONS and embarrassing admissions were among the hitches encountered by the Referendum Party as it prepared last night for its inaugural conference.

Sir James Goldsmith, whose party is demanding a referendum on Britain's role in the European Union, had hoped to parade defectors from the Tory party at today's gathering in Brighton. But last night one of his recruits, the former Tory MP Tim Brinton "went home" to the Conservatives and four others were rumoured to be ready to jump ship today to the rival UK Independence Party.

As John Major dismissed the new party as a "fringe organisation" that would not get many votes, Lord McAlpine of West Green, the former Tory treasurer, and Sir Alan Walters, Lady Thatcher's former economic adviser, admitted that voting for Sir James might help Labour to win seats at the general election.

To make matters worse, the opening news conference on the Sussex coast last night was marred by charges that journalists who had been critical of the party had been barred. Four more potential defectors

from the Referendum Party have held talks with Alan Sked, the UK Independence Party's leader. Three candidates are in Lancashire, Norfolk and Worcestershire. One is a regional organiser.

Referendum Party officials who arrived yesterday morning in a wet Brighton played down the threat of defections and said they were nothing compared with the 10,000 new members the party had attracted this week.

Mr Brinton, 66, said he was "glad and relieved" to be out.

"In 1994 many people of my age and stage were thoroughly fed up with the Tories. Sir James was very attractive because he gave British people a choice. But now it is increasingly clear that the only way we can get a referendum and a proper decision on Europe is by keeping John Major in and Tony Blair out. So I am back."

He said.

Mr Sked's party will hold a rally in Brighton's Old Ship Hotel, and hope to announce their new recruits this afternoon. Mr Sked said that the four members he had talked to were angry at the "shoddy" way they had been treated by the party.

"They told me that Sir

James was a one-man band and a megalomaniac. They are not allowed to express their own views and anyone who is not famous is treated like dirt. They definitely feel they didn't belong to the right social class to be accepted by him," Mr Sked said.

The Referendum Party's biggest catch, Lord McAlpine, frankly admitted that it could help Labour candidates — whose stance is seen as more pro-European than that of the Conservatives — to win seats at the election. Asked on Granada Talk TV yesterday if this made him nervous of the tactic, Lord McAlpine replied: "I am not scared of it. I actually think it is going to happen."

"I think John Major and his Cabinet should be scared of it and I think they should actually announce there is going to be a referendum."

Sir Alan Walters also hinted that the party could let Labour into power. He said: "If that did happen, it would be a Labour Government with a slim majority and looking over its shoulder all the time."

Michael Gove,
Magazine, page 19

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General loathed by corrupt elite believes military is best place to build a new patriotism

Yeltsin's gravest error paves way for people's hero

By GEOFFREY HOSKING

COMMENTARY

AT FIRST SIGHT the dismissal of Aleksandr Lebed looks like just another twist in the seemingly endless factional intrigues which rend the Kremlin. This time much more is at stake: the whole nature of Russian politics in the post-Soviet era. To understand the significance of what is going on, one needs to think back not just to the Soviet era, but even before.

The Tsars used to base their ideology on three cardinal principles: Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality. In his recent autobiography, General Lebed put forward his own holy Russian trinity in a slightly different form: Orthodoxy, nationality, the army.

The difference is significant. General Lebed is a blunt man alienated from the whole political elite in Russia and loathed by them. He learnt most of what he knows about life in the army, and considers it a better school of both nationhood and leadership than conventional politics.

General Lebed represents a new kind of Russian nationalism, and probably one better

suited to the new era than that of his opponents. Historically speaking, Russia, both in its tsarist and Soviet forms, was a huge and diverse empire ruled by multi-ethnic, patron-client hierarchies. Russians were to be found at all layers in these hierarchies, often at the very lowest, especially in the non-Russian regions.

They were the peons and day labourers of empire as well as its rulers. The result was that ethnic solidarity was surprisingly weak among Russians. When "their" empire collapsed this summer — however shaky that may prove to be. For the Russian people are no longer imperialist in the sense of being ready to send their sons to be maimed or killed in colonial wars. That was one reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union, and it continues to be true now. Most Russians sense that Chechnya is a pawn in factional contests for power

It is also why he may well win the war. He is immensely popular in Russia, among people of all social classes, including many intellectuals, who would normally steer well clear of generals. They sense that he is the man to cut

through the unceasing feuding and corruption.

His popularity was reinforced by his success in signing a peace settlement with the Chechen rebels this summer

— however shaky that may prove to be. For the Russian people are no longer imperialist in the sense of being ready to send their sons to be maimed or killed in colonial wars. That was one reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union, and it continues to be true now. Most Russians sense that Chechnya is a pawn in factional contests for power

and money whose prizes are arms and oil. They would be prepared to cut their losses and concede it home rule.

General Lebed, then, offers, Russian nationhood no longer based on imperial domination of other peoples, and also a style of politics no longer mediated by feuding baronial cliques but projected directly from leader to people. That many Russians yearn for this kind of leadership they showed by voting for Vladimir Zhirinovsky in 1993 and 1995. Not that Lebed is simply another Zhirinovsky. He is

altogether a more serious political figure, with experience of military command and of imperial proconsulship; he makes warlike remarks, but sometimes follows them up with statesmanlike actions, as Nato discovered this month.

Like Mr Zhirinovsky, though, General Lebed would lead in a highly authoritarian manner. Politically he favours the free market, backed up by a ruthless campaign against the mafia and tax-dodgers, and he would give priority to creating a reformed, professional army.

President Yeltsin's dismissal of him is a major mistake. General Lebed's brief period of high office gives him the necessary status to become the next President, but does not encumber him with the ties of patronage which would reduce him in the public's eyes to being merely another self-seeking politician. We may look back on his dismissal as being the moment when a new style of Russian politics began.

The author is professor of Russian history at the School of Slavonic & East European Studies, University of London.



Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister, talks to a general as Igor Rodionov, the Defence Minister, listens at a meeting yesterday

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Grozny tense as residents fear slide back into war

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL
IN GROZNY

WITH the removal of General Aleksandr Lebed, the main author of the peace process in Chechnya, residents of Grozny, its capital, are preoccupied with the threat of a resumption of war.

Outwardly, the city is calm and getting back to normal two months after it was wrecked in the latest round of fighting. Both sides have said they are committed to a continuation of the peace process.

But Lyoma, a young Chechen fighter, was sensing tension from the Russians he now serves with in joint patrols in the city. "I brought these along today," he said, rattling a pile of cartridges in the pocket of his camouflage fatigues. "Lebed was a tough man and now they've got rid of him." Then he made a gesture in the air as though pulling a trigger. "As soon as we have to, we'll do it right away," he said.

Pavel, 19, a Russian conscript at a checkpoint on the edge of the city, was equally pessimistic General Lebed, he said, understood the army's concerns and had been through combat. But the Moscow politicians did not care what happened to the soldiers. "Ask anyone and they will say that the war will start again," he said.

The main danger perceived in Chechnya is that the peace process was identified with one man and is now a hostage to Moscow politics. Movladi Udugov, the Chechen rebel

CHECHNYA

information minister, told reporters his republic was now at the centre of a "deadly fight for power".

"After what has happened in Moscow, we are ready for any turn of events," he said. "If war starts tomorrow, we won't be especially surprised. In principle, we are ready for peace and we are ready for war."

Lieutenant-General Valeri Fyodorov, the Russian Deputy Interior Minister, said yesterday that President Yeltsin, not General Lebed, was the ultimate guarantor of the peace agreement. "People come and people go, but the President stays the same," he said. "Questions of war and peace belong to the President and the Government."

But a great many issues in Chechnya are still unresolved, despite the August 31 peace accord. "There are a whole series of issues which could be used to make this thing fall apart if someone wanted it to," said a member of the delegation in Grozny from the Org-

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THE TIMES
weekendSATURDAY
OCTOBER 19 1996

For sale: idyllic French Polynesian hideaway of the rich and famous.
BEN MACINTYRE on the tale of Tupai, island of broken dreams



Only halfway to paradise

Tupai atoll, one of the most private heavens on earth, a small Garden of Eden, will be auctioned later this month at a starting price of £15 million.

The 2,500-acre ring of coral in the Tahiti archipelago boasts everything to gladden the heart of a reclusive multi-millionaire: 25 miles of golden sand, coconut palms ruffled by gentle tradewinds, abundant wildlife, perfect weather, a turquoise lagoon, its own airstrip and, according to legend, a vast stash of buried pirate treasure.

Brigitte Bardot, Princess Caroline of Monaco and the Duke and Duchess of Kent are among the privileged handful of people to have set foot over the past 30 years on this idyllic preserve, where parrots might disturb a sunbather's reverie but the paparazzi never.

Yet there is another, more daunting side to this strange and lovely place: Tupai, according to Polynesian legend, is home to lurking spirits, a sacred domain forbidden to humans where con-

demned prisoners were once literally grated to death on the island's sacrificial altar of razor-sharp coral. Over the centuries men have come seeking fortune and treasure in this Polynesian idyll: all were disappointed and many lives were lost in the quest for its hidden riches, for this island, with its charmed but cruel past, has brought little but ill-fortune to many of those who sought to plunder, possess or exploit it.

The current owner is no exception. On October 31, Maurice Lejeune, the big-spending, free-wheeling but publicity-shy French lawyer and businessman who has run Tupai as a private playground for more than three decades, will sell off his island to the highest bidder. Once one of the richest men in Tahiti, Maître Lejeune's various businesses have run into financial quicksand and his creditors are forcing him to sell. Now 85 and ailing, Maître Lejeune has more reason than most to wonder about the strange spell cast by the atoll as he prepares to surrender a place at once enchanting and cursed.

The tale of Tupai is a saga of

paradise sought and paradise lost. Louis Antoine de Bougainville, the French explorer after whom the climbing plant bougainvillea is named, was the first to record Tupai's dangerous allure. In 1768, in his journal *Voyage around the world on the frigate Boudeuse and the steamer Star*, Bougainville wrote of a "small uninhabited island, covered in fruit trees, wild pigs, birds, teeming with fish and turtles; but the people believe spirits live there; it is their domain, and bad luck befalls the boat that by chance or curiosity steers towards this sacred island. It has taken the life of almost all who set foot there."

The atoll is a central element in Polynesian mythology, a sort of purgatory where unquiet ghosts roam — a "tabu", in the Tongan language, from which our word taboo has derived. Among the local inhabitants spoke a language different from Polynesian, but oddly akin to Spanish.

Daniel Pardon, a local journalist and historian, says: "The atoll was a sorting-place for the souls of the dead and the Polynesians"

fears of these ghosts, the 'tumapau', would scarcely allow them to set foot on this island. To go to Tupai, one must travel in number and stay as short a time as possible."

The beliefs may have reflected an early form of ecological awareness. Knowing that the island's rich ecosystem was also extremely fragile and likely to be destroyed by intense human habitation, Tupai was declared off-limits by Polynesian priests.

navigator had already been killed by natives in the Philippines.

The *San Lesmes* was thought to have vanished without trace, but on modern blood-tests carried out on Easter Islanders in the Pacific

wound up in the Tahiti archipelago where, according to some accounts, they went on a drinking binge that lasted several months.

about sacking the coast of Peru, raping, burning and pillaging churches. Weighed down with stolen treasures, the pirates wound up in the Tahiti archipelago where, according to some accounts, they went on a drinking binge that lasted several months.

to keep the rest in line, and headed for Tupai. Having searched the island thoroughly and found nothing, they headed home again, leaving behind an island pockmarked with holes and a death sentence for murder awaiting them in Tahiti.

The Rorique brothers had shown scant respect for the protective gods of Tupai, but the actions of the next El Dorado-seeker were still more repugnant. At the end of the 19th century a scoundrel by the name of Blackett, a British citizen originally from Nova Scotia, arrived on the island, bringing with him a machine for extracting coconut oil and a grim determination to find the pirate gold. He may have succeeded, for in an act of remarkable brutality he murdered all 12 local people then working on the island's coconut plantation, apparently in order to silence every witness to his find. Their 12 graves can be found beside the island's road. The dastardly Blackett was arrested and condemned to death but the Queen of the nearby island of

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Chi Kung exercises are supposed to make people more creative, better thinkers, clearer-skinned, thinner, and more sensual. Practitioners also claim that it relieves asthma

Enjoy the China syndrome

I can't believe it. After years of trying to hold my stomach in, here is a woman telling me to let it out. Sue Weston is a Chi Kung teacher and my latest guru. This week, she is teaching me and others at The Health Club in Isleworth how to breathe the Chinese way. "What?" said my husband, incredulous. "Why do you need to be taught how to breathe?"

Why indeed. In fact, correct breathing is not something we are very good at. "Most people only breathe using the top half of their lungs. They are like goldfish gasping for air. Your breath should be coming from what the Chinese call the *dantien*, about four centimetres below the navel, where our energy comes from," Ms Weston says.

The game is to breathe from your abdomen by letting your stomach extend like a balloon as you breathe in. Thus my slack belly. It sounds simple. But in China students spend up to year learning the trick. It's difficult because,

unsurprisingly, I had never thought about my breathing before and, in concentrating on it, I tried too hard. So my breaths were noisily obvious, whereas the idea is that the breath should be "silent and like silk". Ms Weston says.

"If the breath is noisy, you are expending too much energy. This should be about reducing effort and giving you more, not less energy. This is what you do to achieve 'the abdominal breath'.

Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart, your knees slightly bent. Relax your shoulders and jaw. Imagine a string runs from the top of your head to the ceiling, holding you upright but not rigid. Place your hands gently over your stomach, below your navel. Relax your buttocks. Take in a slow, steady breath through your nose, allowing your stomach to swell like a balloon. Hold the breath gently. Then exhale, allowing the breath to come out slowly through your nose as your stomach subsides.

ALTERNATIVELY SPEAKING...

by
RACHEL KELLY

CHI KUNG

Here's what happened to me. My breathing slowed. I had a sense of reaching down and connecting with my whole body. I calmed down and felt a warm glow of energy. Yes, I really did, especially once I'd practised. (Better breathing is particularly good for those prone to panic attacks.) "Chi" means "vital energy" in Chinese, while "Kung" means work (and it is). "It's hardly surprising you feel more energetic," Ms Weston says. "You've swapped all the air inside your lungs, instead of just replacing the top slice, so the air is fresh rather than stale. And this new oxygenated air is being picked up by your bloodstream, energising all your organs." You do well to visualise health-giving energy flood-

ing in as you inhale and spent energy pouring out as you exhale. Nor are you wasting energy keeping all those muscles tight.

You should also feel more creative, because true creativity comes from the whole, not just one's brain, Ms Weston says. But why? "It's to do with greater self-awareness, about being comfortable with your whole body," she says. "Our bodies aren't just a vehicle to carry our minds around." Ms Weston guided us through more exercises which help us to breathe properly. This second one helps breathing by stretching the lower stomach. Lie on the floor, bring your feet close into your

FACT FILE

- CHI KUNG By combining breathing techniques and exercises, you can boost energy levels, improve health and become more creative.
- ADVANTAGES Anyone can participate, age and fitness no bar.
- DISADVANTAGES It's boring.
- COST £7-£10 a class. More for individual sessions.

buttocks and let your legs fall apart. Breathe down into the stomach, feeling your stomach expand. Now extend your breath so it comes up from the stomach into the chest. Bring your knees together and gently stretch your legs. There were further

exercises, including one which opened up the back to allow greater lung capacity and helped reduce shoulder tension.

The Chinese have been soothed by Chi Kung for thousands of years. It is practised daily by millions from office clerks to cabinet ministers. Breathing is combined with other exercises to aid total well-being. But it is relatively new to the West. Ms Weston has been practising in Britain for a decade. In theory, the dedicated will become more creative, better thinkers, clearer-skinned, thinner, and more sensual. Practitioners claim Chi Kung will relieve hypertension and help heart complaints and even cancer, and it is good for asthma sufferers.

So does it work? It worked in class, but you have to practise for at least five minutes daily for longer-term effects. Unsurprisingly, the more you put in, the more in theory, you will achieve.

SPECIALISTS

- The Health Club, Administration, 8 St John's Court, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 6PA (0181-758 1996). £7-£10 for ten classes.
- The Central Club, 16-22 Great Russell Street, London WC1. Contact: Michael Tse (0121-929 4485). £7 an hour.
- Friends Institute, 220 Moseley Rd, Highgate, Birmingham. Contact: David Poon (0121-443 1828). £6 for 1 hour.
- GPO Social Club, Deansgate, Manchester. Contact: Michael Tse (0161-929 4485). £7 for 1 hour.
- For Chi Kung teachers in the North, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, contact: Tse Qigong Centre, PO Box 116, South PO, Manchester M20 3YN (0161-929 4485). £6-7 for 1 hour.

SERIOUS SHOPPING

by
GILES COREN



Hardware

My father used to take me to a second-hand shop every Saturday morning. His name was Sydney Venning. "Watch this," my dad would whisper. "Morning Sydney, can I have a quarter pound of galvanised roofing clouts, please?" And the old man in the brown overalls would fill his hand with nails, and shuffle them like peanuts.

He would let them drop from his hand, one at a time, then deposit the handful on the scales and watch as the four ounce weight balanced perfectly horizontal on the other side. Then I would pick up one tiny clout and drop it on top of the pile, to make the brass tray lower it self gently down, heavier now than the iron weight on the other side. If you needed 17 "X" brand No.4 picture hooks he could do it first time, with the dip of a hand. Twenty-two yards of green garden twine? He would roll it off the ball without breaking eye contact, and snip it with a Stanley knife. Venning is gone now, and so are most of those cavernous old shops with their high drawers full of superannuated nails, and their smell of turps and metal buckets (for metal buckets do smell). But in autumn a man still gets that feeling in his bones, when things suddenly need nailing, grouting, sweeping and nailing

in the same small store? All life is here. You can get a soulless Vileda mop, or you can pay £9.95 for a steel mop bucket for that authentic retro feel. After an ersatz older world hurricane lamp? Do not be put off by the £30 price tag in the Conran Shop — the Chalwyn Tropic, a classic of its kind, is yours at R.D. for 5p short of a tenner.

You can go mad at Robert Dyas (indeed you always go mad at Robert Dyas) and yet never really damage your wallet. Take an average spree: a four-pack of barbecue skewers, eight-piece frozen pops set, a kilo of Miracle-Gro, a box of Vitax Pepper Dust "the simple and effective way to deter cats and dogs", and a 5-in-1 multi-purpose Tupperware set, and the whole caboodle comes to only £13.56.

You carry that lot around, by the way, in the big black plastic bucket (£3.25). Then you can get a pair of pliers, one of those bendy screw-drivers handy for screwing around corners, a Staywell pet door, half a litre of meths, a ball of string, a Little Nipper mousetrap, and a bag of spirit salts, all for the price of Mr McGregor's Wooden Bird Table with Beatrix Potter illustration on the box (£34.95).

The Dyas marketing trick is to fill the shop with useful things — like letterbox flaps (£6.95), six-piece combination spanner sets in chrome vanadium steel (£9.95), and ant-killer liquid in bright red zap-guns (£4.95) — so as to fool you into thinking that everything in the shop is equally useful.

So thank God for Robert Dyas. Nothing has changed in there since the 1970s — it is the only place, surely, where you can still buy Soda Stream concentrates (Tizer flavour)! Sure, there is nothing very X Files about six metres of Spanx Drip Strip for £3.99 or a kidney-coloured General Purpose PVC gauntlet (£2.50). But where else would you find a Hedgehog Boot Scrub (£29.95), a Schulte Bean Slicer (£9.95), and six-pack of Pimpernel British Heritage placemats featuring assorted views (£16.95) all

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Marcel Berlins, *The Sunday Times*

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Peter Millar, *The Times*

"an excoriating denunciation of hypocritical diplomacy, opportunistic high politics and exploitative journalism which explodes in an apocalyptic climax"

Gerald Kaufman, *Sunday Telegraph*

OUT NOW

Hodder & Stoughton

The buyers must contend with the watchful spirits'

Continued from page 1
Bora Bora, unwilling to execute a British citizen and incur Her Britannic Majesty's wrath, banished him instead.

Blackett, knowing that to return to the island would be to court summary death, may have passed on the secret of the buried gold to a sailor named Brown. Captain Brown's claims to know the whereabouts of the cache were sufficient to inspire yet another expedition. In 1932 a 20-strong team of explorers left New York aboard the yacht *Genèse* in the certain belief that the treasure would be found beneath Tupai's largest stone temples. Based on no hard evidence, the value of the hoard was officially estimated at £20 million.

A film company invested £130,000 in the project and the Brown Exploration Co. was filmed blowing up the remains of the temple with dynamite. The vandals left with little except bone fragments and a huge debt.

But the treasure-hunters kept coming. In 1953, an Australian named Robert J. Cunningham, who had lived for some 24 years on Tupai, declared that he had never found the slightest trace of any precious metals on the atoll. He recalled, however, spending much of the last two decades chasing would-be gold-diggers out of



Treasure hunters gave the island a turbulent past

the coconut groves. In the 1960s the island became the property of Maurice Lejeune, a rich French lawyer living in Tahiti. He set about transforming his acquisition into the ultimate luxury island hideaway. He brought in electricity generators and television, built comfortable accommodation and created an airstrip. The lawyer worked to protect the natural flora and fauna, but his efforts were not enough to

satisfy Tupai's environmentally-minded but not over-friendly ghosts.

Maurice Lejeune is described as living a "sumptuous" lifestyle between Tupai and Tahiti, 150 miles away, where he ran an extensive series of business operations in addition to his legal work. Selected members of the international jet set, film stars and royalty were allowed to make use of the island, but Maurice Lejeune himself lived a withdrawn, even mysterious existence, not unlike that of Marlon Brando, the American actor who took up hermitic residence on Tetiaroa, another island near Tahiti.

Maintaining an island utopia fit for Brigitte Bardot is not cheap. By the mid-1980s Maître Lejeune was looking to sell. A Japanese businessman began negotiations, possibly to set up a Las Vegas-style resort offering tax-free gambling to wealthy Japanese tourists. The price was said to have been set at £35 million, but protestors from Bora Bora objected violently to the sale of what they claimed were ancestral lands and the deal fell through.

Maître Lejeune's many business deals have not made him universally popular in Tahiti. One Tahitian resident said: "He could have quietly built his fortune and taken advantage of Tupai at weekends and in retirement." Following a series of ill-fated investments, Maître Lejeune's financial difficulties multiplied dramatically and this year his creditors finally stepped in to repossess the island and force its sale. Maître Lejeune will not discuss the auction of his most prized possession. "He is too stressed," says his son. The island, currently home to some 20 labourers

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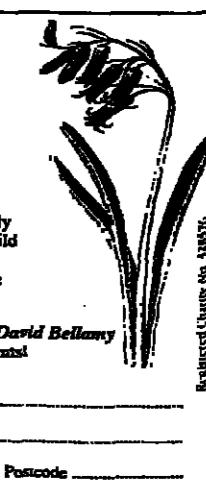
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Found - the missing slink



Dusky pink catsuit, £150, from Whistles, branches nationwide (0171-437 4484)



Lux-tux dressing has become affordable as high street chains experiment with new and ever-more extraordinary fabric mixes. This cream silk jersey shirt costs £59, from Kookai. Wear it open low for maximum 1970s effect



Mauve crepe dress with silver straps, £79, from Kookai, branches nationwide (0171-937 4484)

The bare, spare but luxurious Halston look is back in the high street. **GRACE BRADBERRY** reports

Fashion is set in a retro groove at the moment, with designers replaying 1970s tunes. One of the more welcome looks to sink out of the attic is that of Halston-inspired evening-wear.

Roy Halston Frowick was an American designer, famed for his perfect cutting and immaculate stitching. He used to hang out at Studio 54, the legendary New York nightclub, with Bianca Jagger, Martha Graham, and Liza Minnelli, all of whom wore his clothes.

The look was bare, spare but luxurious: columns of matte silk jersey and slinky-maintain evening gowns with plunging necklines. Halston died in 1990, and Studio 54 closed in May this year. But even before its doors closed, fashion was rediscovering it.

So great is the obsession that there is even a film in the pipeline — *The Last Days of Disco* — which is clearly based on the Manhattan hotspot.

But the most influential figure in the Halston revival is Tom Ford, the American designer who now heads Gucci. In his autumn/winter '96 catwalk show, he re-created the entire look. His distinctive dresses, which drape from gold torques, or around gold rings, at the back and front, have brought the high-glamour of the era flooding back.

The svelte pilot shirts, and satin pant-suits beloved of the 1970s jet-set, are also enjoying a revival but many people won't remember the 1970s quite as Ford does.

His imagination is firmly fixed at Studio 54, where what you wore on the dance floor was just as important as who you were.

Designer names really did matter, because in the 1970s cheap imitations were nothing like the real thing. Life was simply not glamorous if one had to wear nylon. Sparks would fly on the dance floor, but they would be genuine electrical ones, created as the synthetic fibres built up a mighty charge. This time it's different. Lux-tux dressing has become affordable, as high street chains experiment with new and ever more extraordinary fabric mixes.

Once, a body-hugging dress with a plunging neckline and halter-neck would have

been a disaster in anything but matte silk jersey. Now Kookai, Morgan and Warehouse can come up with nylon versions that are not a million miles from the Gucci designs they are imitating.

The labels in high street clothes now tell an extraordinary tale. The Whistles all-in-one shown here, which would not have looked out of place at Studio 54, is made from 50 per cent acetate and 50 per cent llama, an ingenious blend of cool wool and a synthetic textile. Indeed, artificial fibres are the big fashion story of the mid-1990s. *Time* magazine has just devoted seven pages to the subject, examining how leading designers now use sophisticated polyesters, acetates and neoprene. Even Oscar de la Renta, the designer who made his name using silk, is quoted as saying:

"I'm plunging all the way into viscose." Many of the leading names, including Helmut Lang and Romeo Gigli, have created futuristic looks. In the high street, however, the focus is far more on harnessing technology to produce alternatives to natural fibres.

Morgan, the French-based chain, has its own textile development unit to produce fabrics that will imitate high-fashion for a fraction of the price. To do that we sometimes have to develop fibres on our own." Ruth Jones of Morgan says. "Micro-fibres in particular have been successful this winter."

The chain has been able to produce black body-hugging jersey dresses, with built-in gold rings, that capture Tom Ford's predatory, feline look.

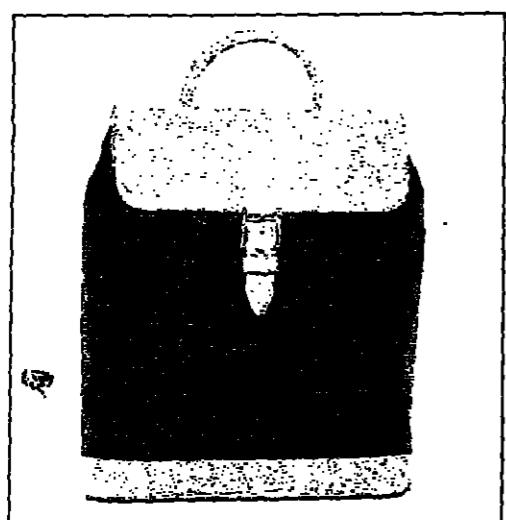
Inevitably, technology cannot quite match the beauty of real silk jersey. But the use of different finishes, and the addition of Lycra, can give synthetic knits a sheen and a stretch that come close.

Even so, the Halston look is not for everyone. Cut-away shapes can reveal areas best kept covered, and even expensive jerseys cling to every bump and bulge.

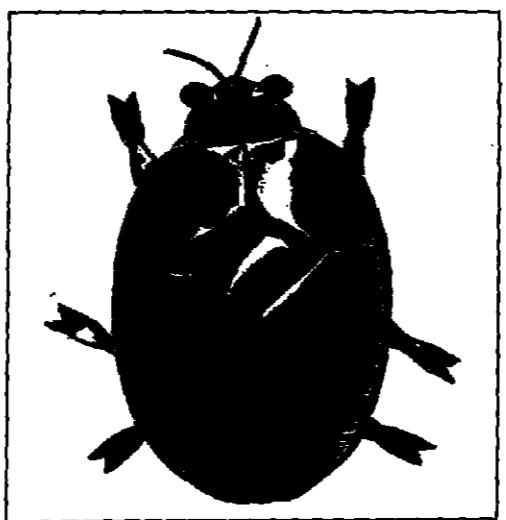
Photographer: Steve Poole
Photographer's assistant:
Suzi Campbell
Hair/make-up: Helen Bannon
Model: Emma-Louise at Elite
Fashion assistant: Sola Siwoku
Over the Hill sofa, £1,200, from
Furniture Union (48 Beaumont Street, W1, 0171-287 3424)

START THE WINTER WITH BAGS OF STYLE

The explosion of styles and colours this autumn in leather, suede and nylon means that everyone can afford to indulge. **EMMA MAHONY** looks at the best of bags bold and beautiful



LOUIS VUITTON
Louis Vuitton launched its new Damier canvas last month as a limited edition. This Arlequin backpack costs £525 from Louis Vuitton, 149 New Bond Street, London W1 (0800 393304 for mail order).



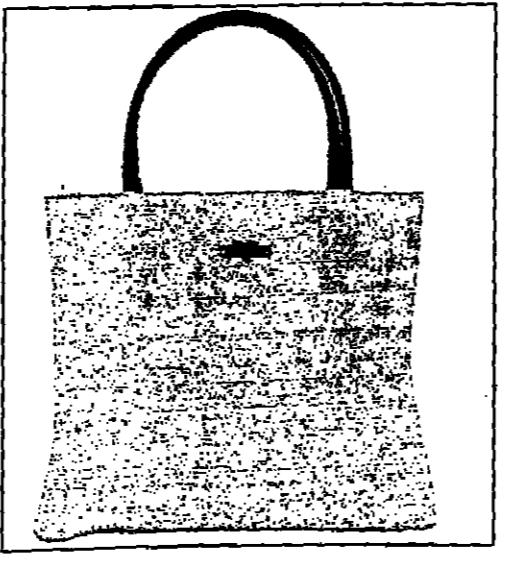
REDWALL
This beetle rucksack (£50) is designed to cling to your back while its legs flap around your shoulders. From Redwall at Harvey Nichols, 109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (stockists on 0171-245 9189).



MOSCHINO
Shopper bag in orange leather with green stitching (£388). Available in four other colours. Moschino Boutique at Harvey Nichols, 109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (stockists on 0171-245 9189).



GUCCI
Gucci's autumn collection includes the "ironing board" rucksack (£430), now in green, lime, orange, rust, black, white, chocolate and blue. Gucci, 33 Old Bond Street, London W1 (stockists on 0171-629 2716).



MORGAN
Morgan's Nylon Shopper (£39.99) also comes in black, chocolate and green. It is a copy of Prada's nylon shopper, right down to the silver logo, but at a quarter of the price (stockists on 0171-436 5255).

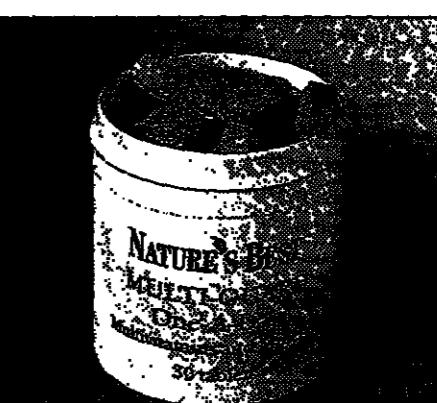


RUSSELL & BROMLEY
Russell and Bromley's unashamedly 1970s purple suede bag (£125) comes with matching boots (£195). Russell & Bromley, 24/25 New Bond Street, London W1 (stockists on 0171-629 8803).

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TW03

It's a breeze on the 39th floor



On a clear day: fine view of the City from the 39th-floor terrace



Listening in: the smaller reception area is wired for a music system



Lounging around: reception/dining area opens out on to a landscaped terrace and is suitable for entertaining — and impressing — large numbers of guests

HOME OF THE WEEK

The Penthouse, 39th-41st floor, Lauderdale Tower, The Barbican, London EC2 · Price: about £750,000 · Travel: Barbican tube across the road. City Airport less than half an hour away on a good day. On a bad day, don't even think about it · Shopping: Jermyn Street-style men's shops near by. Women, get in a cab and head to Knightsbridge. Marks and Sparks have a food hall at Moorgate · Entertainment: A short ride down 39 floors in the lift will take you to the Barbican Arts Centre. This weekend choose from the RSC's As You Like It, the LSO playing Beethoven and Mozart, plus exhibitions and films · If you like long walks, but not on pavements, head for your country estate · Service charge: £2,870 for 1994/95

It is easy to dismiss penthouses as top-floor flats with delusions of grandeur and a price tag available on application. But to call the 2,344 square feet atop a tower block at the Barbican in London a mere flat would be like describing Spencer House as a pied à terre.

What you get for £750,000 (or nearest offer) is three storeys, with acres of windows, perched in splendid isolation on the 39th floor. If you only want to flaunt your equity to invited guests this is for you: no neighbours, no rubbernecks peering through the security gates, no "property is their graffiti sprayed on your garden wall — unless modern revolutionaries have access to a helicopter and are willing to die for the cause. Anonymity is total, security good.

Having taken my shoulder to the vault-like Lauderdale Tower main door, my mission was to negotiate my way past the porter who controls the entryphone and security camera outside the garage. Give the right answers and you gain access to the lifts.

The Tower's public areas are unprepossessing and will gain from the facelift planned next year. Its 1970s decor has not aged well and can seem overdesigned; the small metal Dalek standing in the middle of the lift area on the 39th floor, which I thought was a water fountain, houses the lift buttons, as I discovered when I failed to find them on the wall.

Once in the penthouse, the contrast could not be greater: a light, airy and calm oasis of minimalist 1990s pale beech floors, white walls, muted green and cream decor and an ever-changing sky that could be videoed and sold to relaxation classes.

Savills is selling this property on its location as well as its rarity and high standard of refurbishment. Three-quarters of a million will buy uninterrupted wrap-around views of the mini-Manhattan includ-

ing a vast fridge-freezer, but its severity is softened by unprintable square feet of matt green, colour-washed cupboards. I liked it a lot, but I understand green is not the colour of choice where interior designers gather, as it can be a difficult shade to sell to clients.

The green theme extends to the marble and dark green tiled main bathroom, mercifully free of gold fittings and Jacuzzi just classic white porcelain his-and-hers basins, enough shelving to hold the annual production of French fragrance houses, a power shower and a bath big enough to warrant a lifejacket.

This was turning out to be my kind of property.

And it is not all

formal areas where you might feel compelled to get dolled up in designer gear and full make-up just to read the Sunday papers.

There are a few havens to slob in after a hard day of boardroom coups. The third bedroom has been converted into a small study/TV room

with a huge sofa where you

can relax enough not to worry if coffee gets spilt or you accidentally squash a Belgian chocolate into the cushions.

The second reception area houses a state-of-the-art stereo system with speakers as large as room dividers, and the third floor has been transformed into conservatory. We are not talking a few pots of stringy geraniums and two bamboo chairs here — this is a 20ft by 10ft Kew-like micro eco-system of palms and ferns with a tinkling "water feature" and Welsh slate floor, plus sunbathing terrace (with sound system, phone and entryphone, should being in-

communicado in a small section of Central American forest make you tense).

To stop any feeling of being sealed in the Mir space station — and I did find the total silence almost unnerving — each floor has a terrace, two of them landscaped (the word patio is not used in the same breath as penthouse and personally I do not move in circles where large balconies are professionally landscaped). As it tends to get breezy in the stratosphere, terraces two and three have high walls. You lose the view but the plants and hairstyles survive. These are pretty, walled gardens big enough for alfresco meals, and the distant quiet hum of traffic was rather comforting. At night, with many of the buildings floodlit, you have your own personal City son et lumière. Terrace one is much smaller but has a chest-high wall and an uninterrupted view.

This may seem churlish, but if I were handing over piles of dosh I would want a bigger master bedroom with a huge window, where I could lie back and watch the City wind down in the evening or move into top gear soon after sunrise, not a large lozenge-shaped port-hole and skylight. On the other hand, I would part with serious money for its walk-in clothes cupboard.

I would love to live there, despite not knowing when the dustbins are emptied, whether I could buy milk round the corner at 10pm, or who cleans the windows and keeps the ecosystem alive and the water feature tinkling. I did not like to ask. Captains of all they survey (and there is a telescope on a viewing platform to prove it) did not get where they are today by cluttering up their minds with petty detail and I wanted to be a contender — if only for a morning.

CHRISTINE WHEELER

READER OFFER AND COMPETITION

THE TIMES

WIN A DREAM HOLIDAY TO SOUTH AFRICA WORTH £6,000

PLUS save £1 on a bottle of Amarula Cream

The Times, in association with Amarula, offers you the chance to win an exciting two-week holiday for two in South Africa and Botswana worth £6,000. Also, every reader aged over 18 can get £1 off a bottle of Amarula, a new and delicious cream liqueur. The holiday includes a safari trips to Table Mountain or Victoria Falls, boat rides, fishing, relaxing by luxurious pools in four-star hotels — and £1,000 spending money.

HOW TO ENTER

For a chance to win the £6,000 holiday you must answer two questions. The first is below and another will appear on Monday with the competition entry form.

The fruit of the wild marula tree is famous for which quality?

- curing headaches
- as an aphrodisiac
- preventing mosquito bites



AMARULA is a cream liqueur with a distinctive fruity-toffee taste, made from the fruit of the wild marula tree which grows on the plains of southern Africa.

Locally it is known as the Marriage Tree as the fruits are prized for their aphrodisiac qualities and have for centuries played a part in ancient fertility rites.

The juice is distilled in copper pots and matured for three years in oak barrels then the spirit is blended with stabilised cream. To enjoy Amarula at its best serve it chilled or pour it over ice cream.

Amarula is available in the UK from leading supermarkets and off licences at around £11 a bottle but *Times* readers can take advantage of a £1 off voucher to be published on Monday*.

*Offer not available in Isle of Man or Channel Islands

CHANGING TIMES

PROPERTY NEWS

Alexei moves in, Victoria sells up

ALEXEI SAYLE, the comedian who recently appeared in the BBC2 series *Great Railway Journeys of the World*, has bought an apartment at Tanners Yard, a clutch of Victorian buildings and new warehouse-style flats at Bermondsey Market, near Tower Bridge in east London.

According to agents Cluttons (0171-407 3669), the madcap Liverpudlian paid around £150,000 for his two-bedroom flat in Market House, a converted Victorian building. The flat has a 26ft by 17ft living room, original cast-iron colonettes, arched windows, exposed brickwork and underground car parking.

Biographer Victoria Glendinning is selling her cottage in Kentish Town, north London

THE PLANNING system is holding up further recovery in the housing market, says the House Builders' Federation, the builders' lobby group. Roger Humber, the federation's director, complains that applications to develop land are held up for longer than the eight weeks which the Government recommends. So the number of new homes being built this year is down by 8 per cent, which means that those wishing to buy a new home may well be frustrated.

Royal request

THE PRINCE OF WALES has asked for planning permission to go ahead with building the 72-hectare second phase of Poundbury, his historical village on the outskirts of Dorchester in west Dorset.

The first phase consisted of 180 homes, most of which have been sold. The second phase, which will lie to the west and northwest of the town, will include 40 hectares

of parkland and 32 hectares that can be developed for housing and offices.

The new development has been masterminded by the classical architect Leon Krier. The hope is to create a natural urban pattern of roads rather than a suburban layout of straight, characterless streets.

West Dorset District Council is currently inspecting the plans.



The Prince of Wales tours Poundbury, west Dorset

KNIGHT FRANK (0171-629 8171) is asking £1.5 million for St George's Vineyard in East Sussex, one of the UK's best-known vineyards, which supplies wine to the House of Commons. Set in 37 acres with 20 acres of mature vines, it includes a 17th-century Grade II listed six-bedroom house, an 11th-century tithe barn, a purpose-built winery, restaurant, shop and wine-making equipment.

I'm the urban spaceman

PETER TRIEVOR



Architect Jason Cooper in the open-plan flat he designed. Artful devices such as the bath under the bed, plus careful use of materials, maximise the feeling of light and space

Architect Jason Cooper turned a client's dark and cramped flat into an airy, stylish city pad, writes RACHEL KELLY. How? To begin with, by slotting the bath underneath a sliding bed

Nothing prepares you for what lies ahead when you ring the bell of an insalubrious Victorian terraced building off Westbourne Grove in west London and ascend the narrow, tread-worn staircase. Open the door of the second-floor flat and you enter an oasis of calm and space belied by its entrance. The floor area measures just 17ft by 28ft, into which were originally crammed an unlit internal hall, a thin kitchen, a bathroom, sitting room and bedroom. Now the flimsy partition walls have been demolished in favour of one space which ingeniously provides for all the needs of the flat's owner, 41-year-old cartoonist and artist Sue McCartney-Snape.

"It was previously very depressing, lacking in light and extremely claustrophobic," Ms McCartney-Snape says. "Now I can adjust the flat according to how I wish to use it, night or day."

At one end is the living area, with an unobtrusive Ikea kitchen in birch tucked into a corner. Architect Jason Cooper has raised the units on a white plinth to allow the kitchen to "float" free of the floor level. This device also prevents dirt from collecting in that inevitable gap between floor and units.

Topped in solid beech, the units stand proud of the wall — which means there is no need for wall tiles and no prospect of grime collecting behind the units, which are easy to wipe clean.

While the kitchen table came from Ms McCartney-Snape's previous flat, the sofa comes from Habitat. Its white cover adds to the general impression of space and light. The windows are simply dressed in slatted blinds. "Everything in the flat emphasises the horizontal rather than the vertical, which makes things look bigger," explains Mr Cooper. The blinds occupy less space than bulky curtains and allow light to flood in, while the fireplace is enclosed in a horizontal slab of oak — again to draw the eye sideways.

The floors are made of reclaimed pitch pine finished with a matt seal, which gives them a pleasantly worn feel and a richness of colour which saves the room from any suggestion of Scandinavian iciness.

The living area is divided from the sleeping area by a waist-high partition which doubles as a bookshelf. Tucked behind it is a desk on a higher platform that overlooks the living space. This platform includes the flat's chief innovation: a bed on rails that can be slid into the desk area, thereby revealing a bath beneath it. Such an arrangement also allows for a large recessed "deck" area on either side of the bath to accommodate the

usual paraphernalia of plastic ducks, shampoo and so forth. Ms McCartney-Snape says.

The layered approach neatly solves the problem of making such a small space fulfil so many functions. "And it means that my bathroom is actually very large,

instead of being a tiny box," Ms McCartney-Snape says.

The bath also incorporates an underwater light, which catches the ripples in the water to project an ever-changing tracery of dappled light on to the ceiling and walls. A

discreet extractor fan deals with the condensation, while modesty is ensured by a blind — matching the window blinds — which can be lowered to conceal the raised area.

And what of that bugbear of all tiny flats: storage? In this case, a vast area of hatch-accessed space is concealed beneath the floor.

Extra drawers for Ms McCartney-Snape's drawings are fitted into the steps that lead to the upper areas of the flat. The sliding bed is equipped with large drawers underneath, and the thick walls by the windows conceal cupboards and a miniature basin.

The flat cost £57,000 and Ms McCartney-Snape has probably spent some £25,000 renovating and remodelling the interior. She almost certainly bought a bargain: a local estate agent recently valued the flat at £125,000.

Prescient readers will have noticed one omission so far. What of a lavatory? This has been fitted in under the stairs leading to the upper floors, in a cramped space which once housed the meters.

"There is a nice contrast between the openness of the flat and the tiny, Alice-in-Wonderland feel to the lavatory," Mr Cooper says. The lavatory is deliberately finished with raw wall plaster to give it a womb-like feel.

● Jason Cooper Architects: 0171-277 3104.



The living area incorporates a corner kitchen with "floating" units

Our little wooden house in the wilderness

Goodbye bricks and mortar. A new timber home is cheaper, warmer and more romantic

Blair and Pauline Wheeler captured on video the arrival of their new home, delivered in two halves on a low-loader and manoeuvred into place by crane in a precise, well-practised operation.

For them the timber lodge, on a site bordering Scottish woodland, represents the start of a new life eight months after Mr Wheeler, formerly a director with a large brewery, was made redundant at the age of 50.

"We had always said we would like to retire to the area in Perthshire where we spent our holidays. When a new job did not materialise, we decided to make the move earlier," Mr Wheeler says.

Because they planned to buy a flat or small house outright, before the sale of their home in England, house-hunting in their £45,000 price range was difficult.

"The owner of the park where our holiday cottage was sited said he had a plot for a permanent home and suggested that we looked at the neighbouring timber lodge," Mr Wheeler says. After a tour of the lodge and a visit to the Derbyshire headquarters of its suppliers, Pinelog, the Wheelers decided to buy a tailor-made three-bedroomed lodge for £47,500.

During the 1980s, many single-storey timber houses were sold as second homes, sited either on holiday parks or on private land,



Home haulage: half of Blair and Pauline Wheeler's house arrives on a low-loader. Right: the couple admire their new residence in the Perthshire countryside where they once spent summer holidays

subject to planning permission. As their popularity as holiday homes grew, so did the number of people choosing to live in them permanently.

Most timber homes comply with the statutory legal and planning definition of a caravan but, with minor alterations, can be built to comply with full building regulation standards. Potential owners must apply for planning permission from local authorities before siting their home, unless it falls within the ambit of "permitted development".

One elderly widow was allowed to site a lodge in the grounds of

her daughter's house, enabling her to retain an independent home close to her family.

A handful of companies in the UK supply timber homes, including those which import "kits" from Scandinavia. Paula Skelton, the sales manager of Pinelog, which began manufacturing timber lodges almost 20 years ago, says: "In some areas permission can be difficult to obtain. But in many locations a timber home is more suitable than a brick house."

Many customers say their timber home "represents a dream", she says. "These lodges have a certain charm, a different atmosphere from a brick house. They conjure up an image of the pioneering spirit of log cabins. There is a touch of romance linked in there, too."

Pinelog's lodges are built from Scandinavian redwood. Because all the external timbers are treated against rot and infestation, they should last a lifetime.

Most timber homes include high levels of insulation as well as double glazing, and many owners comment on their warmth. Electric panel heaters are fitted as standard.

Although there are several



standard designs, the lodges are made individually to incorporate customers' particular needs and wishes. Mr and Mrs Wheeler asked for two of their three bedrooms to be larger than standard size and the third, which they plan to use as a utility and store room, smaller.

Pinelog's lodges range from a 25ft by 20ft two-bedroom lodge at £24,800, plus £3,200 for the furnishing pack, to a 46ft by 20ft four-bedroom lodge with two bathrooms at £41,000 plus £5,230 for furnishings. Delivery is extra and usually costs between £1,500 and £2,500.

Farmer Adam Hurst and his

partner Jackie Smith, both 28, and their eight-month-old daughter Yasmin share a three-bedroom timber home which is hidden from public view to comply with planning consent conditions. Sited on Mr Hurst's father's 300-acre dairy farm near Stoke-on-Trent, their 20ft-by-36ft house has a surrounding verandah and cannot be seen even from the nearest country lane.

Simon and Lou Savage's timber home overlooks the river at Stratford-upon-Avon, built on five-foot-high pillars to escape flooding, on land they bought initially to use as a garden.

Their individually-designed

house, with two bathrooms and large patio windows, cost around £50,000. "When we bought the land there was an old wood-and-asbestos holiday home on it and planners gave us permission to build a new property," says Mr Savage. "I had always wanted to live in a wooden house — I like the idea of having a verandah all round. It's very economical and in a great location. We can go shopping in town by boat up the river to avoid parking problems."

LYNN GREENWOOD
● Pinelog, Riverside Works, Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1GS (01629 814481).

Late developer makes its debut in the colour purple

Colchicums, those woodland perennials with cheerful flowers, brighten up autumn, says STEPHEN ANDERTON

Just when you think woodland perennials are over and there is only autumn leaf colour to look forward to, out come the colchicums — great clumps of crocus-like flowers in glowing rosy purples, mauve and white, rising leafless from the ground.

I left all mine behind in Northumberland, and so jumped at the chance to buy some in Saffron Walden market at the beginning of September. In the dry state they are the oddest plants. Technically they are corms rather than bulbs and look like large, deformed tulip bulbs with their shiny brown skins. Big ones can be the size of a small fist, and the offsets when you divide them only the size of a snowdrop.

They have this odd lump at the bottom, the foot, from which springs all activity during growth. You can bring a large dry corm to flowering by placing it on a sunny windowsill, on a saucer with no soil, such is the reserve of energy and moisture in the corm. The bulbs I bought had already begun to develop the bud in its sheath alongside the bulb, and I took great care not to damage it, because through that sheath will come the leaves in spring.

Colchicums are not dormant for long. The great flappy leaves appear in spring but do not die down until June. The yellowing foliage flourishes around for ever, a dying diva refusing to leave the stage. Once everything is quiet, that is the time to divide them and spread them around the garden before new roots or shoots appear with the autumn rains and cooler nights.

Some colchicums are tougher than others. The bigger, common species, such as Colchicum autumn-



Colchicums give late colour

ale, C. speciosum and their hybrids, will stand lifting in flower. Most of my Northumbrian plants came from the mother of a farmer friend, who would turn up with a bucket-load lifted in full flower, and they were never any worse for that.

Ted Bullock is head gardener for the National Trust at Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk. He looks after a National Collection of colchicums that includes 38 species and 25 cultivars. He disapproves of moving them in flower, but then he is dealing with the smaller, difficult species as well as the large, easy ones.

The smaller species are less generous. They flower with less concentration, in drifts and drabs. Some come in July when their colour is a less precious commodity. Some wait until spring to flower. And all in all they require more attention. Mr Bullock grows them in pots and troughs, where he can care for them easily. The easier, bigger colchicums are set out in demonstration beds, where visitors can compare colours and performance. He also has long borders of the species C. tenorei running purple under box hedges by the thousand in September. The garden at Felbrigg (01263 837444) is open until November 23. When I see col-

chicums in the wild (usually C. autumnale) in southwest France, they are always dotted thinly in long grass at the edge of woodland. They do not seem to colonise thickly, but when I gave a bucket of small corms to my mother-in-law a few years ago, she had a dense, flowering colony in three years.

Every bit of the plant is poisonous so you have to be careful planting them if there is a risk to animals and children. The leaves must be left to die down completely or the new corm will not develop properly underground. If you hate the sight of them, then C. agrippinum (named after that poisonous old Roman) is tidier. The leaves only reach 7·5in high and sometimes disappear as early as May. The flowers are rosy-lilac but the petals are chequered. I used to grow it through a carpet of silver Stachys byzantina.

Colchicums do not seem to be prone to virus problems, but slugs and woodlice sometimes take a fancy to them. Mr Bullock finds that slugs prefer the wide-necked cultivars and species such as C. byzantinum, whose necks they slither down to do their dirty work. Consequently, he likes to lift his corms every couple of years and clean them up before replanting. With glamorous species such as the large white C. speciosum 'Album' he finds it well worth the effort. He covers pots and troughs with shingle to deter pests from above. For the smaller species a light soil is helpful, but most of the common ones thrive in quite a heavy loam. The strong species are also suitable for planting in rough or meadow grass, where the leaves are less of an embarrassment in spring.

Colchicums are not dorman-



The Savill Garden is a beautiful woodland garden developed from a natural site

Open this weekend

LATE OCTOBER is a watershed for garden visiting, signalling the end of the flowery scenes and the closure of many gardens for the winter months. But visits through the autumn and winter can be equally rewarding and instructive. Many places offer somewhere to walk, spectacular views and architecture within a natural landscape.

■ **The Savill Garden, Wick Lane, Englefield Green, Surrey (01753 860222)**

Off A30 into Wick Lane, 3m west of Egham and 5m from Windsor. Open: daily to end Oct, 10am-6pm, daily Nov 1-26, 10am-4pm, closed Dec 25-26. Entrance: £3.50, accompanied under-16s free.

THE SAVILL GARDEN (pictured left) exemplifies one of the most important styles of 20th-century gardening: the woodland garden developed from a natural site. Autumn is a wonderful time to visit, to catch sun filtering through the changing foliage of the venerable beeches and to follow the network of paths that lead through the 35 acres, up and down the sloping ground and across the streams. Without the summer array of flower and foliage, you can appreciate the ornamental trees and shrubs added during the 1930s.

■ **Overbecks, Sharpitor, Salcombe, Devon (01548 842893)**

1.5m south of Salcombe via single-track roads. Open: daily all year, 10am-5pm (sunset if earlier). Entrance: £2.

THERE ARE few other gardens in England where palms are the most widely planted trees. They are a testament to the remarkable microclimate that Overbecks enjoys on a terraced slope to maximise the sun. The result is a wealth of plants that overflow from the Edwardian terraced framework. From late summer into autumn half-hardy perennials, different fuchsias and one of the garden's exotic highlights, the blue-flowered Chatham Island forget-me-not, Myosotidium hortensia, all display. But perhaps most interesting at this time of year is the foliage and shape of the many broad-leaved or evergreen trees and shrubs from around the world that flourish in the garden.

■ **The Dorothy Clive Garden, Willoughbridge, Market Drayton, Shropshire (01630 647237)**

On A51 between Nantwich and Stone. Open: daily to end Oct, 10am-5pm. Entrance: £2.60, children: £1.

NAMED AFTER the woman who so enjoyed seeing this garden begin during the last years of her life, and created by her husband, Colonel Harry Clive, it is a place to be enjoyed at any time of the year. The former quarry now has paths winding through woodland garden between great groups of shrubs decorated with ornamental trees, including fine acers. The scree garden is a treasure-trove of rare alpines stretching down towards a lily pool.

GEORGE PLUMPTRE

• We regret that the opening times of Hackwood Park were given incorrectly in Weekend last Saturday.

WEEKEND TIPS

■ Prune back any small, first-season hedging plants of beech, hawthorn and privet by two-thirds or to about 6·9in to ensure a dense, bushy hedge in the future.

■ Complete any trimming of evergreen hedges.

■ Cut out fruited stems on cultivated blackberries, and tie in the new ones at even spacings. Sever any layered tips and replant elsewhere.

■ Plant strawberries.

■ Plant nerine bulbs, and divide old mounded clumps after flowering.

■ Check ties on recently planted young trees before autumn in case they have become tight.

■ Check that the greenhouse heater is working before the cold weather arrives. Put up polythene or bubble film insulation inside greenhouses in cold areas.

GARDEN ANSWERS

STEPHEN ANDERTON replies to readers' letters

Q Plants and flowers under lime trees in my garden become covered in a black sticky substance. Is there anything I can do? — L.A. Master, London WC1.

A Lime trees are subject to attack by aphids, which drip their sticky excretion ("honeydew") on to plants below, and these become black with sooty mould and the dirt and dust of cities. Lime trees are greedy and shallow rooted, and best suited to large gardens with only turf or gravel below. Where honeydew is a problem, regular spraying of the foliage beneath with a hosepipe will stop it becoming unpleasant.

Q My garden is in an area covered by a Tree Preservation Order. For legislative purposes, what constitutes a tree?

A It would be prudent to avoid planting species controlled by law in case pruning, topiary or other training contravened the law. — P. Richardson, Cornwall.

A TPOs can apply to any species, so long as it is big enough. In Conservation Areas (not the same as a blanket TPO), a "protected tree" is one which has a diameter of 75mm or more at a height of 1.5m. Permission must be sought to work on trees over that size.

Q Our magnolia tree is carrying deformed buds, some as large as 7in. It is 35 years old, and was shaped and thinned out five years ago, and we have it retrained every two years. Our trained "forester" does not recognise the problem. — F.E. Lucas, Knebworth, Hertfordshire.

A These are seed pods

and will split open to reveal the seeds. You could grow new ones. Some magnolias have large pods and *Magnolia acuminata* is known as the "cucumber tree". It is not necessary to prune magnolias, unless they are in the way. Is your "forester" that well trained?

Q My local shop is selling "wild tulip bulbs from Holland". Is it likely these have been dug up from the wild, or will they

be stockists who have agreed not to trade in wild collected bulbs. FFI has also set up an Indigenous Propagation Project, to get Dutch villagers to produce their local bulbs commercially and sell them abroad. You can join the FFI for £12 a year, and receive the guide for free.

● Readers should write to **Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 9XN**. We regret that it may not be possible to deal with every request. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times also regrets that any enclosures cannot be returned.

A PICTURE OF BRITAIN'S WILD PLANT LIFE

SAVE £5 ON FLORA BRITANNICA BY RICHARD MABEY

Flora Britannica, the definitive new guide to wild flowers, plants and trees, illustrated with more than 450 colour pictures, will be regarded as a classic for many years to come. *Times* readers can buy it for just £25 including p&p (£30 EEC).

Flora Britannica is the fruit of a five-year project to create a cultural flora for Britain undertaken by the author and broadcaster Richard Mabey. It is an account of the role of wild plants in our social lives, our arts, our customs and our landscape.

It is a work of imagination and scholarship as well as reportage, the culmination of Mabey's research and thinking over the last 20 years.

His research aroused popular interest and

grassroots involvement on an exceptional scale. People all over Britain, both rural and urban, have been encouraged to record and celebrate the cultural dimensions of their own flora and to send their memories, anecdotes, observations and regional knowledge to *Flora Britannica*.

Richard Mabey has skilfully combined these unique contributions with his own beautifully written account of the origins, habitats, history, character and usage of 1,000 species, including trees and ferns.

It is a work of imagination and scholarship as well as reportage, the culmination of Mabey's research and thinking over the last 20 years.

His research aroused popular interest and

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GOLDEN

A green-fingered mission impossible

BY JANE OWEN

Serge Charles took on an impossibly sized garden — and won. He wanted a garden which would evoke the jungle-like look of his mother's plot in Mauritius but a few factors stood in his way. Tottenham, north London, has its good points but streets of Edwardian respectability have little in common with the fecund, voluptuous vegetation of an Indian Ocean island.

His garden is so tiny and awkwardly shaped — a small, overshadowed triangle at the back, a five-foot strip at the front — that most people would have given up. And the heavy clay soil made it even more of a challenge.

Yet today his house is referred to locally as "the one with the beautiful garden". From inside, Rousseau-esque leaves have obscured the view to the street beyond, giving a taste of the exotic, while people passing by outside have the pleasure of discovering an unexpected oasis.

In the same way, the tiny but elegant front garden pictured right also affords both private and public pleasure. In fact, the rules followed in each instance are similar: a mass of interest is packed into tiny spaces by making the most of colours and shapes. The alternative to this approach is to keep things perfectly simple, with only one type of plant and colour range.

In 17 years, Mr Charles has transformed the five-foot-wide cleft between the front of his house and the six-foot hedge which borders the garden into an area of startling abandon.

A great whirl of colour, leaf shape and plant types races along the ground and

up the wall of his east-facing house. The planting is so tight that there is little room to walk.

The general style is cottage garden but the plants are, on the whole, not. Traditional, neatly-clipped balls of the hedging honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida* snuggie beside the huge, pale-green-leaved Datura, the foot-long bell-shaped flowers of which fill the street with a heavy honey scent even in late September.

demure dark-green uniform beside red-and-white ballerina flowers of fuchsias. Hostas, ferns and the green and white striped *Miscanthus "Zebrinus"* grass, now so despised by haughty culturalists, mingle with roses and that brilliant white-stemmed bramble Rubus cockburnianus. Some species are planted directly into the ground while others, such as the acid-loving camellia, live in pots.

Hack your way through

take. The first step is to ignore the rule book — most rules are aimed at normal spaces. Then you must make a policy decision: either to keep the design extremely simple, using only one type of plant (evergreen and grey planting such as box or lavender, for instance) or to pack in a mass of interest, as Mr Charles does, so that there is always something new to look at. Your next objective is to get the soil right, or use pots if the garden is filled with rubble. Another favourite trick is to pack in "eyecatchers" to draw attention to far points in the garden and away from eyesores such as unsightly neighbouring skyline or intrusive conifers. These can be anything interesting — from a sculpture to almost any artefact. I once saw a fire hydrant, painted white, used as a successful eyecatcher in a semi-formal garden.

One of the most important aspects, often overlooked, is to make the most of any available light: use mirrors or pierce "gossip windows" into hedges to allow light through, and use pale shingle, stone or decking for the ground surface. Do not attempt grass because it never works well in small areas. Trellis, especially heavy-duty hand-made trellis (consult garden designers in the Yellow Pages) is an excellent way to let light in, give privacy and allow for vertical gardening. Use every dimension: beds, walls and, in very hot spaces, small pergolas for climbers.

Finally, give the impression that the garden goes on further than it really does by building doors or mirror-filled arches on boundary walls "leading through" to next door's garden.



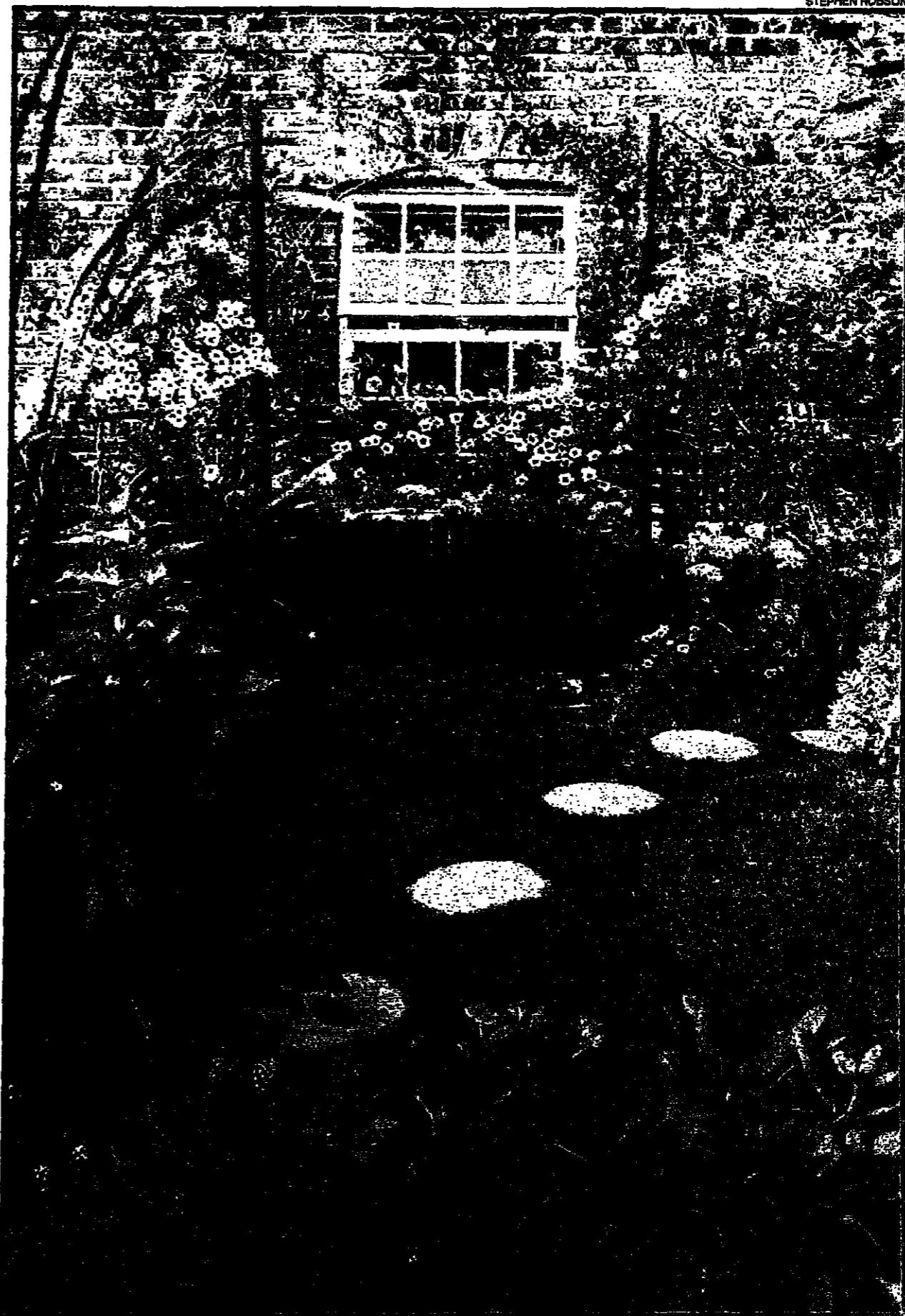
Serge Charles: recreating Mauritius in a small, cramped London garden

Like much of his garden, the honeysuckle regularly feasts on tomato feed and a thick manure mulch over the clay, which has had shingle and garden soil added. The Datura is treated like bedding and chucking away at the end of each season. White-flowered Solanum, bright orange-berry firethorn, flamboyant grey-green remains of the clematis "Nelly Moser" and purple-flowered "Jackmanii" race each other up the red brick walls of the house. Five-foot-high, purple-flowered *Vernonia patagonica* (*V. bonariensis*) zings beside bright orange Crocosmia flowers. Slender lily stalks stand sentry beside a double pink camellia, now in its

front garden and down a tiny side passage filled with pots and you emerge in the back garden — an impossible 18ft equilateral triangle of land, where the riotous planting calms to a cool hillock of bamboos, ferns and grasses. There is colour, too, from begonias, geraniums and oleander (it flowers every year and never gets any frost protection).

The effect of a two-storey brick wall to one side of the back garden is offset by old mirrors hung from the walls, climber-covered trellis and a thick layer of white shingle, all of which bring light into the garden.

To tackle a garden as small as Mr Charles's, there are a number of routes you can



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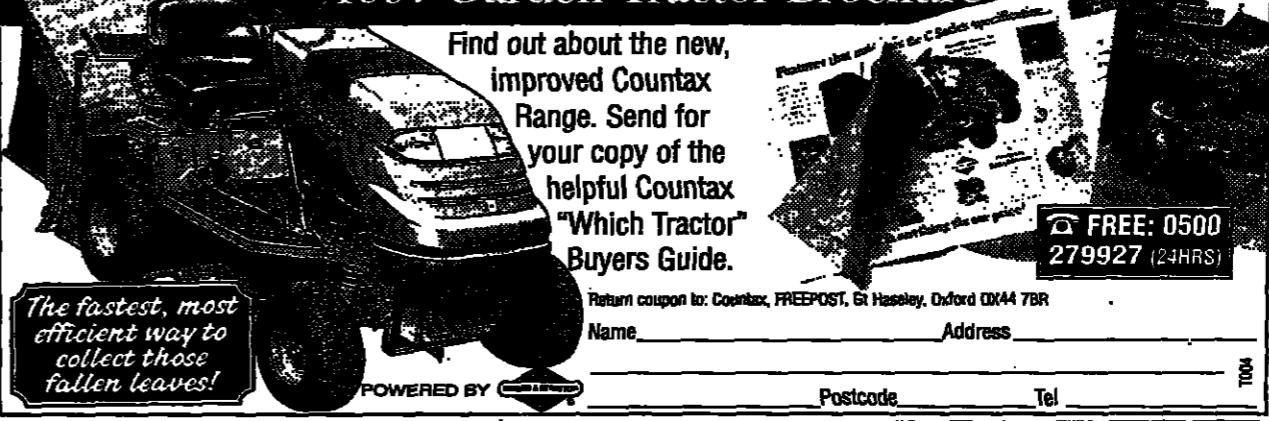
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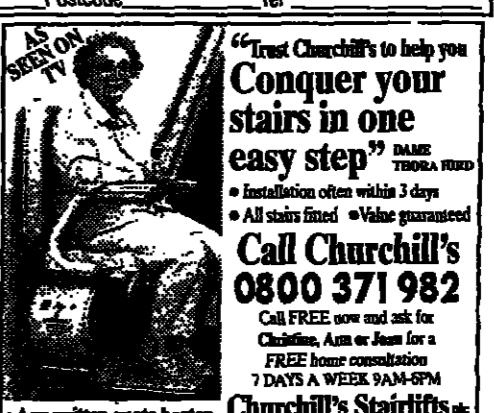
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Scooby's previous owners were reported for cruelty

The ruff guide to travelling with dogs – avoid Britain

With Britain's quarantine regulations under review GUY WALTERS meets a man who has travelled the world with his pets and sees how other countries cope

If they carried passports, the two miniature long-haired Dachshunds owned by David Gilmour, a 60-year-old Canadian investor would boast entry stamps from, among others, Canada, the United States, and France, where they live with their owner.

Mr Gilmour, who runs businesses, resorts and developments around the world, says that he has had no problems taking Monte and Carlo anywhere in the world apart from the UK. His horror at our quarantine laws has put him off coming here. He says: "Because of business ideas and various opportunities I wanted to buy somewhere to live in England but when I looked into the quarantine laws I was appalled. It put me off buying in Britain, and it certainly stopped me from investing — and my investments are significant."

The procedure Mr Gilmour adopts to fly Monte and Carlo from country to country is simple. Because the dogs are small, they can be taken on a plane as hand luggage, in a small container that can slip under the aircraft seat in front. Larger animals would have to be carried in the hold, which Mr Gilmour feels is risky, especially when aircraft take for hours on hot runways during delays.

Bureaucracy in most countries is minimal. In France, Mr Gilmour says that he, Monte and Carlo are just waved through. In New York and the rest of the United States, a record of inoculations is examined. In Canada the same applies. When driving through continental Europe, most officials barely check humans, let alone animals. What deterred Mr Gilmour from visiting the

UK was the fact that he would have to pay £3,000 to have his dogs incarcerated for six months. "For a dog to spend six months in quarantine is the equivalent of a human spending five years in a prison cell," he claims.

Monte and Carlo both have identity numbers tattooed in their ears, they have been vaccinated against every canine disease possible, and carry documentation from the best vets in the cities where they have lived. Their owner says: "They cannot possibly have rabies

'Because Monte and Carlo are small they can be taken on a plane as hand luggage'

and there is no need for them to be punished by quarantine. He is happy to obey the 30-day home quarantine laws that New Zealand enforces. "It seems like a good medium. You can monitor your pet at home. It's not as though you wouldn't take it to the vet if it became ill." The system operates on a principle of trust, in which owners must ensure that the animal does not leave their property for a month.

Monte and Carlo would be welcomed in Sweden where quarantine laws have been scrapped in favour of animal "passports" that show that the animal has been vaccinated against rabies, leptospirosis, distemper (or

dogs), has been dewormed, and is registered with the Swedish International Traffic Veterinary Control (ITVC). If Swedes wish to take their pet to any country other than the UK, then the passport information will be enough to ensure access.

Non-Swedes wishing to bring their pet into the country must show a vaccination record, and the animal must bear an identity tag, in the form of a microchip or a tattoo. Swedish Customs then enter the number into the database, and the computer will show whether the animal can enter the country.

The Swedes make no claims that the system is not bureaucratic. Suzanne Eliasson of the ITVC says: "There are many import rules to fulfil and many questions from importers and it is true that it is easier to run a quarantine system. However, we have a well-staffed telephone helpline at the Ministry of Agriculture." A real benefit is that the system also pays for itself by the imposition of an administrative fee. This costs 400 Krona (£38.46) for up to ten animals compared with £1,500 to keep one animal in quarantine in the UK.

Mr Gilmour says that he is regularly approached by animal smugglers, who will illegally take your animal into the UK for £500 each. "With a passport system, nobody would want to do this," he says. "Who in their right mind would entrust their pet to a smuggler when they would only have to pay an administrative charge? However, with quarantine costs, such smuggling is far more likely — £1,500 is a lot of money."



Bureaucracy for pets travelling to countries apart from Britain is minimal if they have inoculation certificates

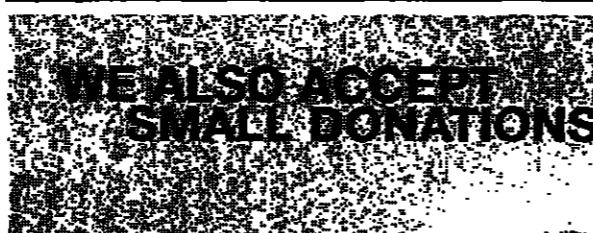
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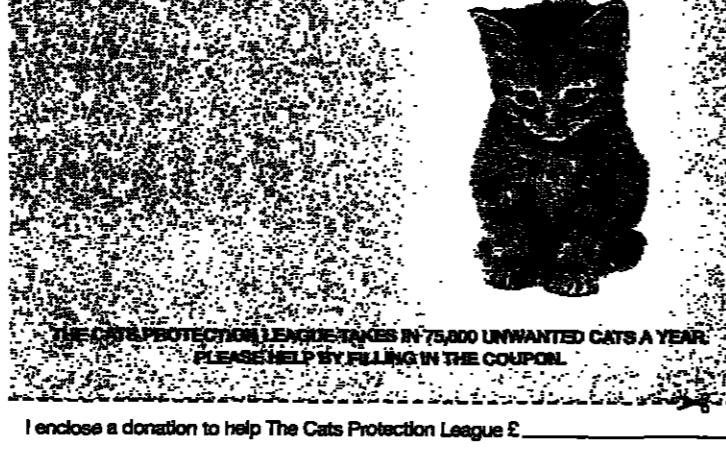


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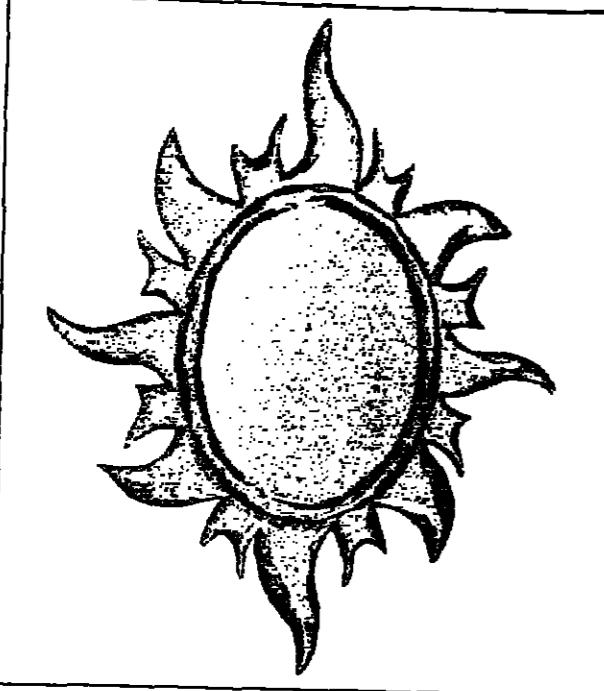
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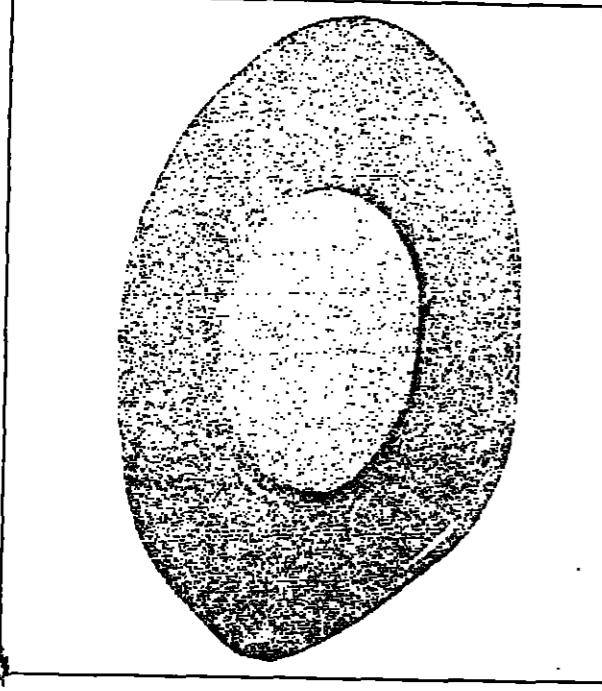
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CECILIA MIRROR
The Cecilia mirror is one of a wide range by designers Hampshire and Dillon, available in gold or silver (£99) from the Furniture Union (0171-287 3424)



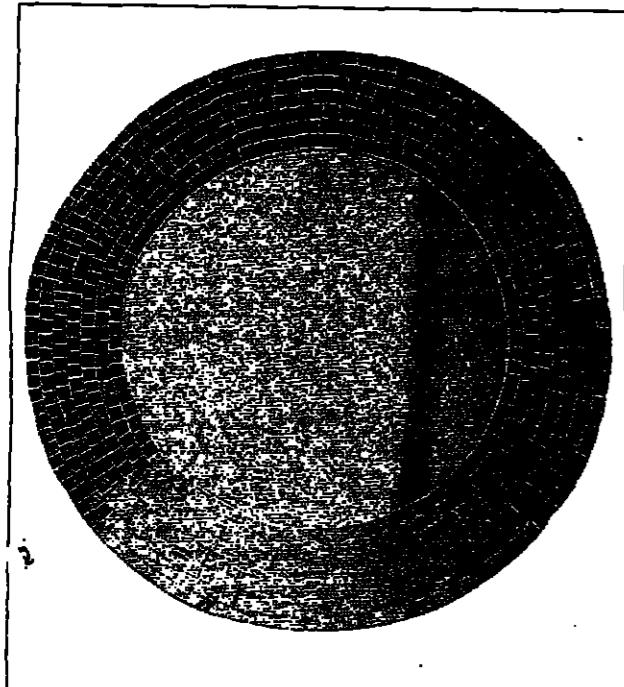
MERCURY MIRROR
Charlotte Pack's mercury mirrors are made from resin and stone dust. They range from £55 for the small mirror to £220 for the larger version. Available from the Furniture Union (0171-287 3424).

Mirrors as art? **AMANDA LOOSE** enters a looking-glass world of bold new designs and style statements

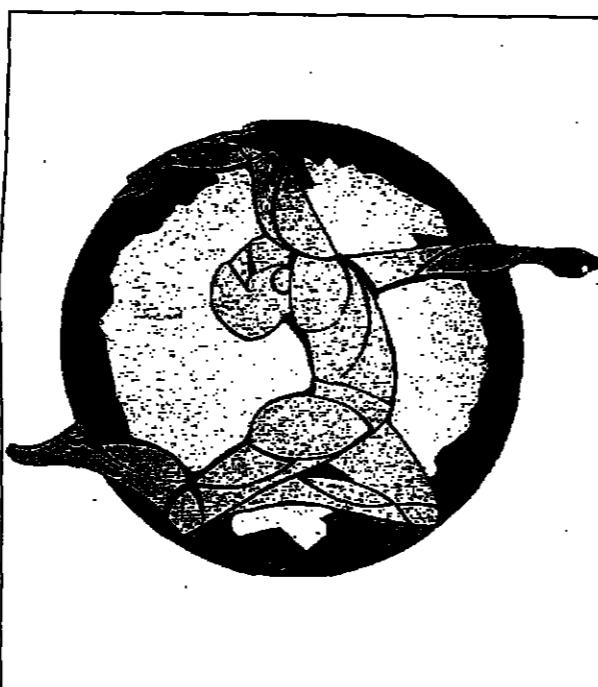


Time for reflection for Doris Nolan and Katharine Hepburn in the 1938 comedy *Holiday*. Until recently mirrors were purely functional; now they can also be works of art

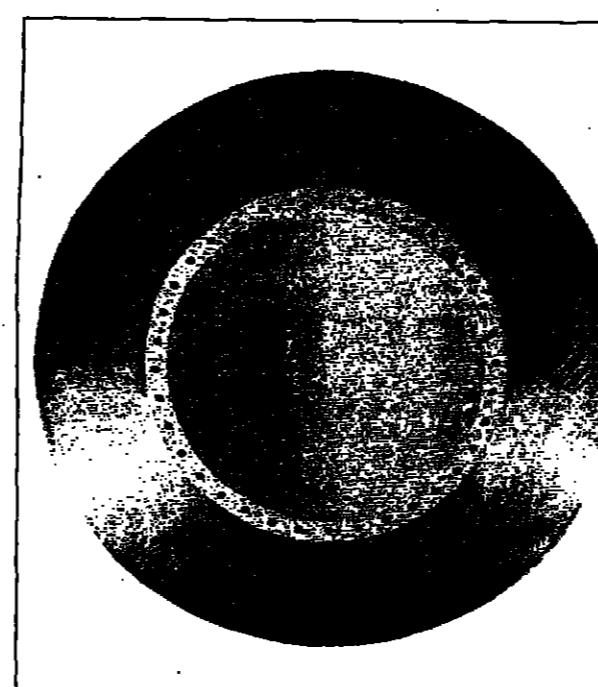
Here's looking at you



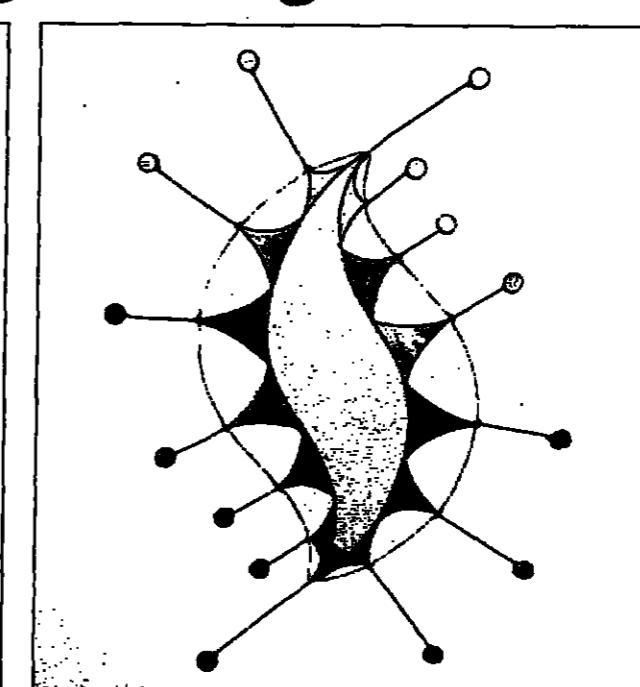
MOSAIC MIRROR
Graham & Green have opted for the classical look: a mosaic mirror with gold-painted metal squares, based on a plaster frame, for £205. (Graham & Green, 0171-727 4594).



THE SWIMMER
This mirror (£150) is available from Poly Pollard, who designs glass and acrylic mirrors in her Spitalfields shop and also works to designs provided by her customers (0171-375 3263).



GIANT SILVER DOT
This futuristic-looking mirror (£155), made from aluminium, is also available in brass for £189. Smaller versions of both mirrors are stocked at £69.95. (Heals: 0171-636 1666)



THE ATOM MIRROR
This splendidly distinctive and unusual mirror (£161) is by glass design specialist Diaphanous Glass and is available from Purves & Purves (0171-580 8223).

RUTH GLEDHILL gives thanks for all things fishy

Harvest of the seas

I THOUGHT there was something fishy about an invitation to a service six months before the event. And so it turned out. The front entrance to the church in the narrow backstreet of the City of London was closed, but a faint quivering of the nostrils told me that we should dive around the corner, where a shoal of pretty girl choristers in deep ocean blue told us where to weigh anchor. This was the City's annual fish harvest festival, still going strong despite the migration of the Billingsgate fish market downstream to near Canary Wharf. An array of fish made eyes at us from the aromatic display in the porch of St Mary at Hill, the church of the Watermen and Lightermen company.

The fish has been a symbol of Christianity since Jesus urged his disciples to leave their boats and become fishers of men. It became an early symbol of Christ because the letters of the Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, are an acronym of the initial letters of the Greek words for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. In the early, persecuted church, a fish symbol on doorways would indicate to insiders a place of Christian worship. It quickly became linked especially to the Latin church, where for centuries it has been a tradition to eat fish on Fridays.

British governments have at various times sought to create other fish days besides Fridays, as a ploy to help the fishing industry. Today, anyone stuck behind a car with a fish symbol on the bumper knows that the driver in front is an evangelical. "We praise Thee, Lord.

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Harvest of the seas

Who bidst us reap, The harvest of the sea," we sang, in one of two hymns written especially for the fish market, fishermen and fishmongers. "Just as the sea at Thy command, Yields up to its shoals, So we must bring, O Lord, to Thee, The harvest of our souls." Our reading, from Genesis, celebrated the creation of heaven, the earth and the sea in between. There was a prayer written for Billingsgate market: "Come among these thy servants who toil beside our river day by day to provide food for their fellow men". There was a prayer for seafarers, lighthouse keepers, port pilots, fishing fleets and dock and harbour workers, as well as a harvest thanksgiving.

Our sermon was preached by one of the church's "flying bishops", appointed to look after traditionalists opposed to women priests, and whom I shall forever think of as now the "flying fish bishop". The Right Rev Edwin Barnes, Bishop of Richborough, described how he grew up in a fishing port, Plymouth, and how his last "honest job" before beginning his ascent of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was as vicar of Hessle, Hull. He referred to those thrown out of work in the various traumas the fishing industry has experienced, to the limits on catches imposed by European policy. "We thank God for the harvest. But we should above all ask for wisdom to weigh the present against future profit," he said.

The fish in the porch were to be donated to the Salvation Army old people's homes. As we left, I turned to look at one particularly round and succulent specimen, and could have sworn the old trout winked.

St Mary at Hill Church, St Mary at Hill, London EC3
SEE (0171-626 4184).

'Suddenly you're back at school'

Whether one's school-days were pure hell, or (as many an Etonian has discovered to his cost) such perfect bliss that nothing in later life can ever match the experience, the great thing about them is that they are over. Or so we think, until parenthood brings us nose-to-nose with the experience for the second time.

The first of many rude educational shocks to strike in our house came when my son was a couple of years old. Congratulating myself on my superhuman efficiency, I started to ring around the local schools with a view to putting his name down for the impossibly distant day when he might be old enough to learn something. How old did you say he is?

He said, several school secretaries, with barely-concealed derision. Oh no, dear, I'm afraid our lists for his age group have been closed for quite some time now.

An event that had been a vague dot on the horizon swiftly turned into an overwhelming obsession. Should I move house? Convert to Roman Catholicism? And what advice does one give a three-year-old who is about to be assessed for a place at nursery school by a formidably corseted person in twinset and pearls?

Parents, I rapidly discovered, were firmly shown the door at these interviews, so I took to giving my son the third degree in the car on the way home.

"Did you tell her about your reading? And how you can count up to ten? What did she ask you?" "Nothing interesting," said Alexander reflectively, showing signs.

it struck me with a chilly frisson, of the Bad Attitude that had made his mother's schooldays such a trial for everyone involved.

The day that the letter arrived offering him a place at the excellent school up the hill is fixed in my memory almost as clearly as the day he was born. Oh thank God, said I. Phew what a relief. Now I can relax. I had, however, reckoned without the Other Mum.

They had been, the Other Mum, of my acquaintance, a stalwart bunch during the dismal period when we were all trying to find a starting-place for our children on the Long Road That Leads to the Glittering Prizes of Academe. Daily we would ring each other to exchange scholastic horror stories with grim relish. We go back, my fellow-mothers and I, a long way. All the way back to the fourth form, in some cases.

Together we had learned to replace our pre-pubescent competitiveness ("What did you get in French?" "Ninety-three per cent, actually. What about you?" "Oh, 97 per cent, actually...") with a laboriously acquired super-cool languor about everything most important to us.

We were cool about clothes

PERSONAL LIFE

BY JANE SHILLING



Schooldays: hell first and second time around

(NEWS UK)

Charlie school.

"Simply can't wait to get there in the mornings," confided one mother, formerly the most languid of us all: "I find him standing by the front door with his little satchel in his hand, saying 'I'm going to learn something new today, Mummy'. Well, of course, he was just ready for a new challenge. I do think it's awful the way the ones who find it more of a struggle get labelled crybabies..."

Reeling a bit from this sucker-punch, I was wholly unprepared for the follow-up: "And how's Alexander's reading coming along?" "Reading?" said I (prevented by force of habit from boasting that that very evening my offspring had read in a clear and intelligible voice several sentences from *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*, and at the same time had volunteered, unprompted by me, the information that the French for rat was *rat*). "I don't think they do much reading yet. As far as I can tell he spends most of his time sitting under the desk with his hands over his eyes."

Describing Alexander's mortifying (although temporary, I trust) habit of beginning each new day at school in a state of complete emotional collapse, I would pause for some answering vignette, only to hear, in tones where pity was irritatingly mingled with self-satisfaction, that Flavia and Johnny and Jake loved

M y friend replied in tones of deepest concern. "Oh no! But that's awful. I know how keen you were to send him to a state school, but perhaps you ought to start thinking about remedial teaching. I mean, Flavia's already reading aloud from Beatrix Potter — and you know how difficult she is. All that stuff about grottering. And she's showing an interest in French. We're a bit worried that she might be seriously gifted. Such a responsibility, having an outstandingly intelligent child. They get so easily bored, you know..."

With difficulty, I prevented myself from replying that, although Alexander might be a halfwit, it was a great comfort to know that at least he was unlikely to find himself much troubled by *ennui*.

But the awful truth was plain to see just when you think you're properly grown-up, you find yourself back in the playground, with all its attendant terrors and humiliations undiminished by the passage of time.

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The real cost of motoring past and present

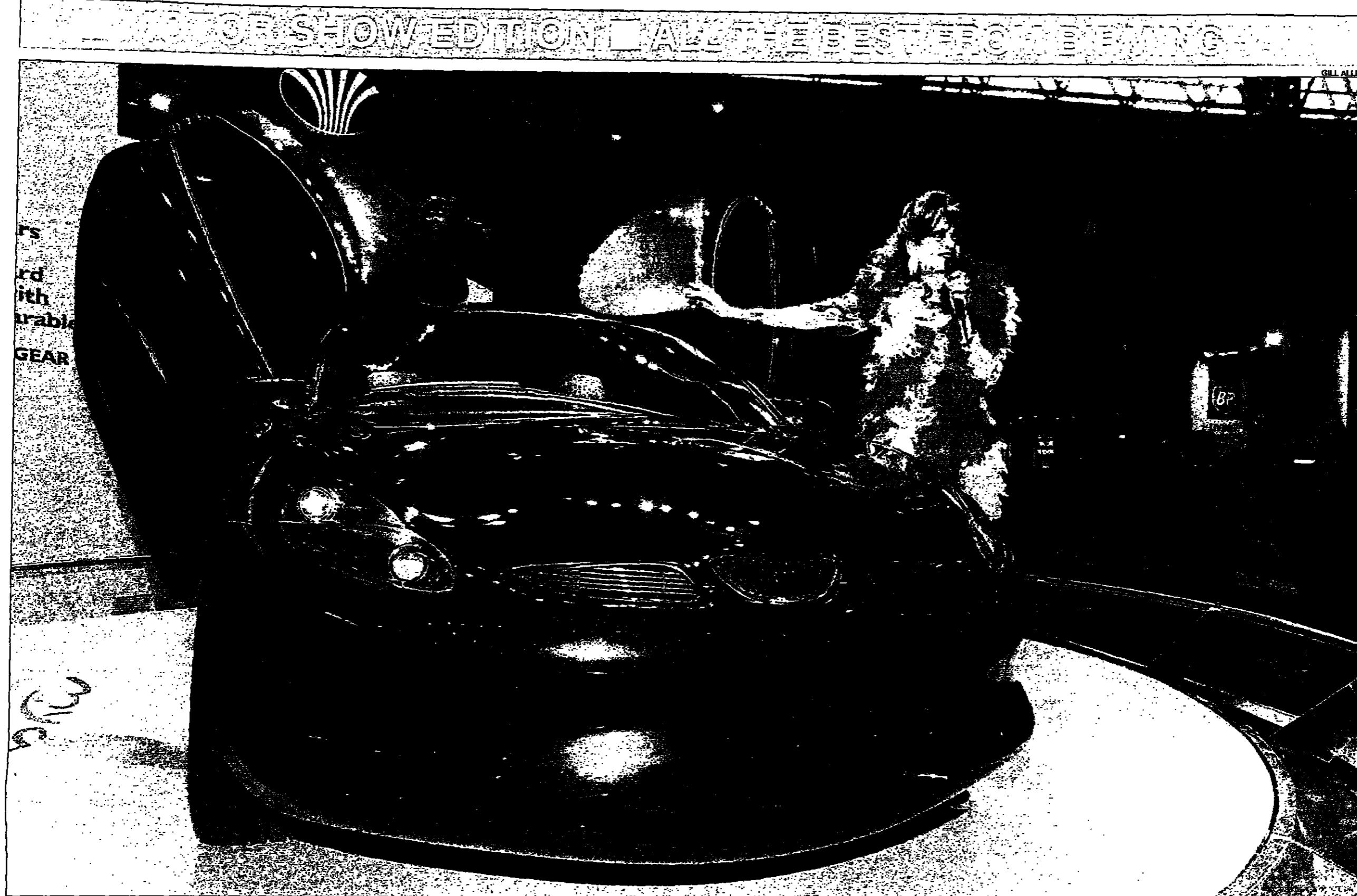
Page 2

CAR 96

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

Lifting the veil on a car of the future

Page 10



Margarita Pracatan introduces Daewoo's gull-wing Mya concept car, the best at the motor show this year. It's exciting, innovative and packed with the latest technology, and the design skills that lay behind it are all uniquely British

The future: from Worthing, via Korea

Exiting, innovative, and loaded with new technology: the best concept car at the motor show this week might have a foreign badge—but the brains behind it are all British, writes Vaughan Freeman.

The gull-wing Mya 2+2 sportster is a car of the future from Daewoo, the controversial South Korean manufacturer best known for its bargain-basement sales in this country.

But the Mya was conceived and born not on the other side of the globe in Seoul, but amid the cosy and very English setting of Worthing in West Sussex, where tea and refinement are usually higher on the agenda than cutting-edge automotive design.

For the West Sussex coast town is where Daewoo has its Technical Centre, its European design headquarters where 900 designers and engineering staff, connected via a warehouse-sized room of computers, keeps in touch with the global Daewoo empire.

Their brief is to ensure Daewoo stays not only in touch, but one step ahead of the latest styling trends

sweeping the important British and European markets. So committed is Daewoo to its British team that it is spending £30 million to expand the plant.

What is it though about the British psyche that makes them into such sought-after designers? Jim Mason, managing director of the centre, says: "As part of Daewoo's global strategy, the company needs experience in Western automotive design and engineering, which is why the company bought this centre, which was then owned by International Automotives Design."

Daewoo cannot attack world markets from a domestic Korean base, which is why we are the main design centre outside South Korea. I think the British have an open-minded approach. One of the things about British designers is that they are very flexible and creative, and have an ability to consider different ways of doing things.

They are also very enthusiastic about the product from a practical point of view. The Brits like to get their hands on the bits and pieces

instead of sitting in a sterile office in front of their computer design workstations."

Prime example of that design flexibility is senior designer, Brian Osbourne, who came up with the flowing, fluid exterior of the Mya. A graduate of Coventry Polytechnic, he joined the Worthing Centre when it was still IAD. In his time he has worked on everything from the design of aircraft seats to motorcycles in India, crash helmets, handheld computers, London buses, Zanussi washing machines, as well as cars and trucks.

Osbourne says: "It is not just in automotive design. You will see British dominance too in things like graphic design. One factor might be that in Britain it is OK to be a non-conformist."

Cindy Charwick designed the Mya interior, and Ginger Ostle, Daewoo's chief designer, believes British encouragement of the individual, as opposed to the attitude in Japan and other Asian countries where nails that stand proud have to be banged flat to the wall, contributes to that inventiveness.

Ostle, who worked for Triumph

cars in Britain, before moving to Germany to work for Porsche, then for Mazda before he joined Daewoo, agrees that Britain leads in car design, but that this ingenuity is only matched by the peculiarly British failure to recognise the skills and abilities of its home-grown designers.

He says: "That was one of the reasons why I left this country and moved to Germany for 16 years". Ostle, who commutes regularly back and forth from Worthing to his German home, says: "Travel 20 miles across the Channel and designers from Britain can double their money elsewhere in Europe. Something that continually surprises me, despite it being a smaller and smaller world, is that the understanding of different cultures is still surprisingly naive and lacking elsewhere, especially in Asian companies."

Asian and Japanese firms, he says, concentrate primarily on the demands of their domestic customers, so that their cars for Europe and America suffer. That is not the

case in Europe generally, and in Britain in particular. "Until recently the UK was the best place to learn automotive skills," Ostle adds. Schools such as London's Royal College of Art led the field though things are changing. "Until the rest of the world discovered those British institutions and started sending their people to them, the British took advantage, and then went abroad to use the skills they had been taught."

The British it seems are encouraged to be creative, to be individuals. It is a stimulating culture here, a very stimulating environment, as opposed perhaps to Asian cultures where the group culture prevails, or California where the stereotypes are stifling."

The lack of recognition clearly rankles though. He says: "We can justifiably pat ourselves on the back and say: 'Aren't we brilliant'. But if it would be great if that brilliance was exploited in the country of origin, and it was not left to foreigners to exploit it."

The Worthing team hopes the Mya will win at least some of the recognition they feel is their due.



The Mya makes up in innovation and content what it lacks in name-appeal (a Mya apparently is a South American clam shell and the car, like the shell, is supposed to cocoon the occupant). The doors sweep up and out, fitting snugly into deep scoops in the roof, allowing front and rear passengers easy access.

The interior is arresting. Among the goodies for rear-seat passengers is a pop-up video games unit. Powered by a 2-litre, 16-valve 130bhp engine, the Mya is vastly different from most prototype concept cars in that it does work, since it is based around the fully working running gear from forthcoming Daewoo cars.

"Will it make it into production?" Ginger Ostle, chief designer, says: "I think there are features in the Mya that are positive, and recognition from the public at the motor show would help. If reaction to the Mya is favourable, it would be stupid to ignore it."

Forget when it was built. Consider who built it.



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Used Cars

For more information, call 0800 010107

The industry's annual beano is not for the public, neither does it have much to do with the real world, although it does keep the hacks fed and watered

And after all that, it's just for show

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

Peter Barnard

to prove that there really is such a thing as a free lunch. And of course we get to sit in fancy cars without having to fork out fanciful amounts of money.

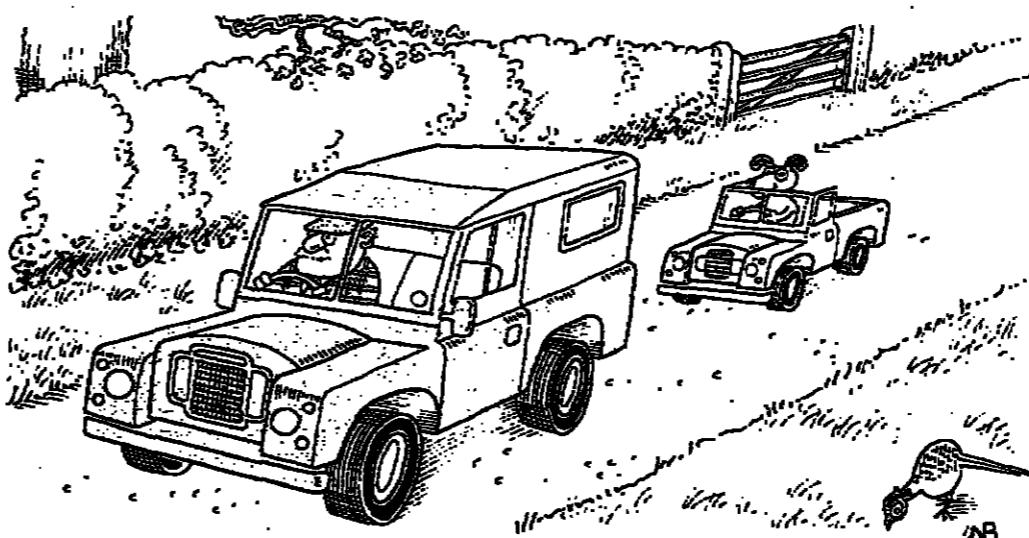
But the curiosity of this or any other motor show is that it attracts huge numbers of ordinary people

without actually being designed for ordinary people. The public, if the truth be told, are somewhat of a nuisance, for they tend to get in the way of the television cameras.

They also have a habit of treading on the feet of eager fleet buyers, the people motor shows are really all about. At the end of the show there is always an announcement about orders placed, running to mind-boggling millions of pounds. If the sums add up at all, they add up to an awful lot of woolly of fleet buyers.

The noticeable thing this year, at least as far as the media coverage is concerned, is the widespread use of the words "small" and "smaller". Not only is there the smaller Land Rover, there is also the small Ford Ka (a draft name) and the little battery-powered Peugeot.

I can just about see the case for



smaller cars: they are economical and handy for parking around town, though the latter half of that argument is not exactly overwhelming. Nearly all in-town parking areas these days are divided into bays, either on the street or in a multi-storey, so that the actual size of the car is largely irrelevant.

The Peugeot is intriguing, though, for it appeals to the right-on types who have convinced themselves that cars would be perfectly all right if only they did less harm to the environment. They like the sound of a car that makes no noise.

Unfortunately, battery technology, though fast improving, has

not yet reached the point where it is the answer to all our prayers.

Not the least of the problems lies in a piece of information that scientists came up with a year or two back.

The essence of what they found was that if one was to convert all the cars in London to run on batteries, a factory would need to

be built outside the capital which made the batteries. And in making the batteries, the factory would pour out as much pollution as would all the cars in London if they still ran on petrol and diesel.

And most battery-driven cars, including the Peugeot, run for about 40 miles before they need recharging. This is good news for the people who sell us electricity, who will be able to use even more power station capacity and pump out even more pollution. What we really need is power stations that run on batteries, except that ... you see what I mean.

All of which suggests that we are some distance from becoming a nation of electric-car drivers. Even if that day arrives, there will be a great panic about pedestrians being mown down in their thousands because they could not hear us coming. At which point all the cars will have to be fitted with a machine that plays the noise of an engine.

The Birmingham Motor Show is a splendid institution and long may it flourish. But let us not deceive ourselves: as far as the ordinary driver is concerned, the show has similar qualities to synchronised swimming. It is entertaining, but meaningless.

Is the Ford now more affordable?

Remember the good old days when you could buy a family car and still have enough change from a tanner to buy some lard? Stuart Birch looks at the real costs

The words roll off the tongues of a myriad motor industry executives and salespeople, especially around motor show time. We are told that a car is "value for money", that it is "a bargain, a snip, a steal".

Sometimes, that much-abused word "affordable" sounds like a bad joke. But despite price tags that may look daunting, a comparison with average earnings suggests that many new family cars today offer fine value.

We have all heard parents and grandparents saying, "I remember when you could buy a new Ford for a hundred pounds." But rarely do they mention how much they earned at the time. In 1936, Ford, concerned that sales of its 8HP Model Y were slipping, boosted them dramatically by offering the car at exactly £100.

According to the Office for National Statistics, average weekly earnings for 1936 were £3.90 per week — £202.80 a year. A typical car worker was paid even less: *The Economist* records a figure of £180 a year for 1938, although a senior civil servant (Assistant Secretary Grade 5) would have received £1,300. So even a lowly Ford 8 with no heater, a top speed of 59mph, three-speed gearbox, rod-operated brakes and suspension like a bouncy castle still represented half a year's pay for most people.

My father bought a used Model Y; he called it the "rattietrap". There was no radio but entertainment was never in short supply: the six-volt electrics would often fail to start the 933cc engine in cold weather so he would be out there whirling the starting handle. Deep puddles were best avoided, as water often spouted in through the hole in the floor for the handbrake.

From its curly-bumpered stem to its rubbery stern (the spare wheel was mounted at the rear; there was no boot) the Ford 8 was just basic transport.

After World War II, a new Ford Anglia (Britain's cheapest car) could have been

WHAT THEY COST YOU	
Price £	Average annual salary £
1936 Model 'Y'	100
1946 Anglia 8	293.36
1952 Anglia 10S	595.00
1966 Anglia 10SE DL	568
1976 Fiesta 950L	2,079
1986 Fiesta 1.3L	5,650
1996 Fiesta 1.25i LX	9,165

Fiesta prices from £7,645 for Encore with older 1.3 engine. The Economist estimates that the purchasing power of a factory worker's earnings in 1936 (£16,500) provided 240 per cent of the purchasing power of 1996, taking that year as 100 per cent.

Source: Office for National Statistics, *The Economist*, Ford Motor Co.

bought for £293.36 in 1946. It had the same 933cc 23bhp engine as the 8, but managed 60 mph. Standard equipment included: sun visor (one), left floor mats, cloth upholstery, indicators were an option. Average pay had risen to £6.70 a week — £348.40 a year — so the Anglia was seriously expensive.

A decade on and Ford's range began with the Popular at £413.85, the engine was 1172cc and power a heady 30bhp. Top speed was 60.3 mph and 0-50 took 24 seconds. mpg was typically in the mid-30s. This was still basically a pre-war design complete with single-blade vacuum-operated windscreen wiper which all but stopped when the car accelerated hard. Options included joy of joys — a heater, direction indicators and some advanced technology: a windscreen washer.

By then, an average wage earner had £11.50 a week rolling in — £598 a year before tax. The price of the car was still well over two-thirds of a year's wage.

The next ten years saw significant changes. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan said Britain had never had it so good, and cars started to become far more civilised, quicker and more interesting. The 1966 Anglia 10SE de Luxe, with its high-revving 997cc 39bhp engine could reach 73.5 mph and scorch to 60 mph in 15.6 seconds. The gearbox was "four-speed close-ratio". The Anglia had manual plunger screenwashers, self-cancelling flasher indicators, two sun

visors, two-colour PVC upholstery, ashtrays and exterior mirror. Options included a radio and seatbelts. Price: £566, average wage in 1966, £17.10 a week, £889.20 a year.

Things were looking better. Then in 1976 came the big step in the small-car league: the front-wheel-drive Fiesta. Even the basic "L" model was good for 82 mph. Standard equipment included front disc brakes, radial tyres, folding rear seats, two-speed wipers, heated rear window and seatbelts. Price: £2,079, average national wage had jumped to £54.90 a week. £2,854.80 a year. The car again cost just over two-thirds of a year's income.

Ten years on, though, as inflation stoked up, the price of a Fiesta 1.3L had soared to £5,650, but it did have a five-speed gearbox and top speed of 101 mph. Servo brakes had become standard, as had reversing lights, halogen headlights, electric screen-washer, electronic ignition, and push-button radio. Average wage by then had soared to £189.50 a week, £9,854 a year, making the car look good value.

And so to the current Fiesta. Fitted with the excellent 1.25-litre Zetec-SE engine, it is good for 106mph and gets to 60 in 11.9 seconds, says Ford. At 75mph it will do 41.5 mpg. Standard equipment of the LX version includes: driver's airbag, seatbelt grabbers, rear seatbelts, engine immobiliser, four-speaker radio-cassette player, driver's seat-fit adjustment and sunroof.

Price: £9,165 — but the Fiesta can be had from £7,645 with the older 1.3 engine.

Average weekly wage before tax is now £351.70; £18,289.40 a year. But new to the equation is the chirpy little Ka at £7,350 in standard form, £8,195 with such goodies as power steering with fat-tire tyres, radio and CD player.

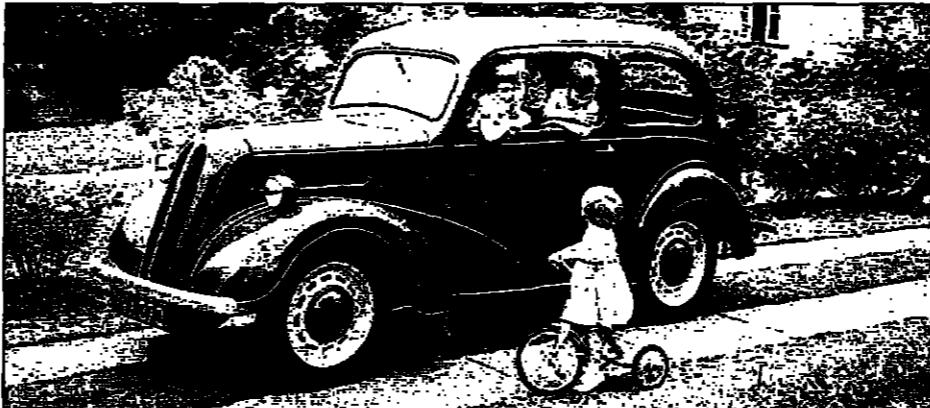
What emerges is that the price of the Model Y of 1936 represented about half the annual average wage, and today's Fiesta LX does much the same.

But in terms of safety, comfort, performance, economy and value for money on a cost-to-national-average earnings ratio, the Fiesta is out of the crude Y model.

As the golden oldies are fond of saying: "Cars aren't what they used to be." Thank goodness.



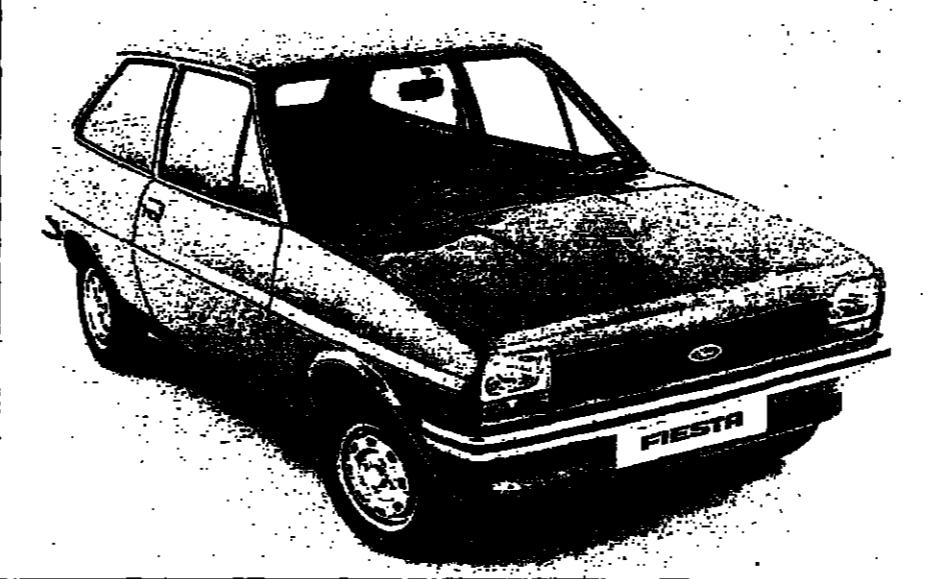
Ford boosted sales of its 8hp Model Y dramatically in 1936 by selling the car for £100



The company's Fifties Popular was still basically a prewar design with added extras



The 1966 Anglia 10SE de Luxe could scorch — by the standards of the day — to 60mph



The big step in the small-car league came in 1976 with the front-wheel-drive Fiesta

Rolls-Royce price changes over the years

Being rich now costs less

■ AND NOW FOR the really good news. At the top end of the market the real price of a car has diminished quite significantly. Out of sheer curiosity, we asked Rolls-Royce how their prices had fared since 1936. This was their reply.

A 1936 Rolls-Royce Phantom III had a chassis price of £1,850. Typically, there would be an extra £700-£800 for the body or coachwork, adding up to a total cost of around £2,600. That would have been 12.82 years' toil at current rates.

So, on the basis of these silly sums, the time needed to earn enough to buy a Rolls-Royce is diminishing: in theory, at least, one day far in the future, we might all be able to afford one ...

would have cost £500-£600. The total cost would have amounted to about £6,500 — 8.14 years' work.

Coming right up to date, a 1996 Rolls-Royce Park Ward Limousine is £210,853, a hefty 11.53 years' work at average current pay rates. But a 1996 Rolls-Royce Silver Dawn is £118,557, representing a trifling 6.48 years' work at current rates.

So, on the basis of these silly sums, the time needed to earn enough to buy a Rolls-Royce is diminishing: in theory, at least, one day far in the future, we might all be able to afford one ...

Many years ago, I

once became ex-

tremely annoyed at

the prospect of paying

a gallon of petrol

for a pint of beer.

Star



Coca-Cola at 59.5p a litre works out to £2.70 a gallon and milk is only marginally more expensive if you pay the National Dairy Council's average UK price of 39p a pint, £3.04 a gallon. Pausing only to sample Sainsbury's own-brand ice cream (vanilla flavour) at 34.5p a litre, or £1.56 for a gallon scoop, we move onwards — and definitely upwards.

If Renault's Nicole wants to use Perrier water (retail price 72p for 75ml, which means 1.04 a litre), she will have to pay £4.72 for a gallon. Papa, who's always struck me as the G&T type, may prefer to add tonic water to his tank, which at 85p a litre will cost him £3.86.

A good virgin olive oil (£6.99 a litre) will set you back £31.77 for a gallon; Del Monte orange juice and Ribena cost the same as tonic water; and, at £2.99 a litre, one of those hair shampoos with added conditioner (£5.50 a litre) will cost £22.75 a litre and thus £1,000 a gallon. Pip. Meanwhile, the Scotch Whisky Association in Edinburgh says a decent standard blend retails at £10.70 per 70cl, which is £15.28 a litre thus £69.40p a gallon. However, they also turned up a 50-year-old Glenfiddich — at £6.250 a bottle, which means £38.28 a litre. After paying £40.58 for a gallon, you would need a drink.

But instead of an arm and a leg, how about blood? The National Blood Service sells its product for about £45 for 450ml; a near £100 a litre, coming to £454 per gallon — after which you would definitely need a cup of tea and a biscuit to recover.

B ut all these pale into apologetic insignificance when we reach the perfume counter at Harrods, where, exclusive to that store, we can buy Amouage at £2,500 for 10ml. That's not a misprint, and it means £250,000 a litre — £1.13 million a gallon.

One should add that it does not come in a plastic bottle, but in a silver case coated in 24-carat gold with a semi-precious stone inset — but that would rattle around in the petrol tank.

And don't forget that, whatever you pay for your gallon of diesel petrol, 177.84p plus 17.5 per cent VAT goes to those nice people at the Treasury.



Today's Fiesta LX costs as much as its Model Y ancestor



Beer works out at over twice the price of petrol

There's no point in the motor show can carry away a bag of dreams. Of the seat capacity with a first prize for the first garden with the best

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

CAR 96

3

MOTOR SHOW

Where British beef still sells best

They crouch on the smaller stands, frequently in lurid metallic shades of purple or blue, often adorned by bosomy models in deliberate defiance of political correctness. But these are the real British success stories of the show, writes Alan Cops.

The new Jaguar XK8 has automatic transmission as standard, the Ferrari 550 Maranello boasts traction control and the Mercedes SLK is one of the most refined cars on show. But a small band of British makers now specialises in supplying no-compromise sports cars world-wide and for most, business is booming.

TVR took three orders for its new supercar, codenamed project 12/7, within hours of unveiling it even though its 7-litre V12 engine is yet to run. A development of the company's successful V8, the new unit in unrestricted form will produce an astonishing 660 bhp.

The car is intended for racing but is designed to be driven to the track. Its interior, dominated by the roll cage essential for a racing car, is spartan and noise levels will be high. Its aggressive styling is dictated by the need for

OPENINGS

The Motor Show is at the NEC, Birmingham until next Sunday. Adults £9, children and pensioners £5, car parking £5. Box office: 0121-780 4133.

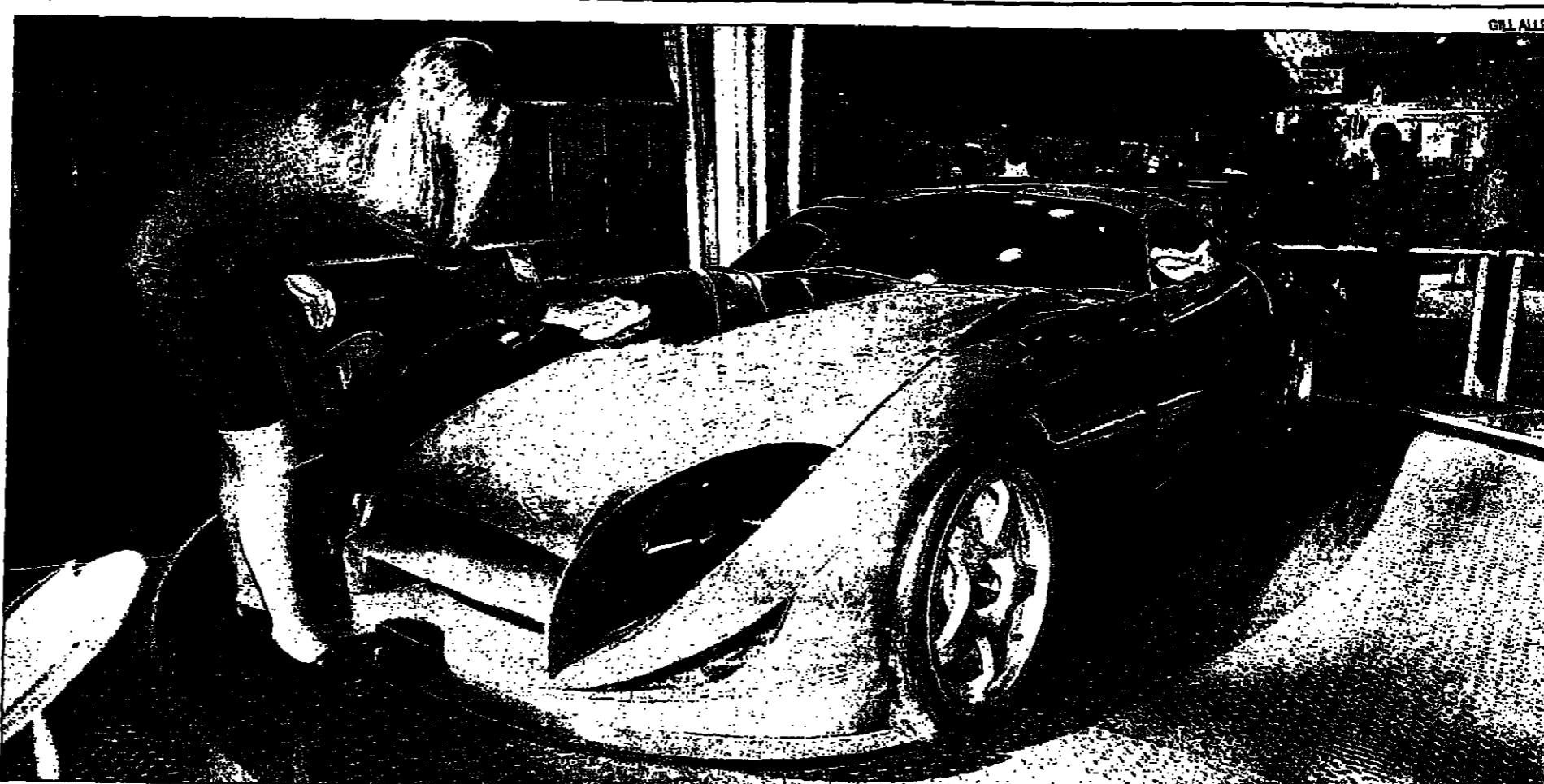
downforce and a powerful airflow at high speeds. It is the company's first car to feature Formula One-style carbon disc brakes and is expected to cost well over £100,000.

TVR is committed to running a two-car team in the BPR Global GT race series next year and may take it to the Le Mans 24-hour race.

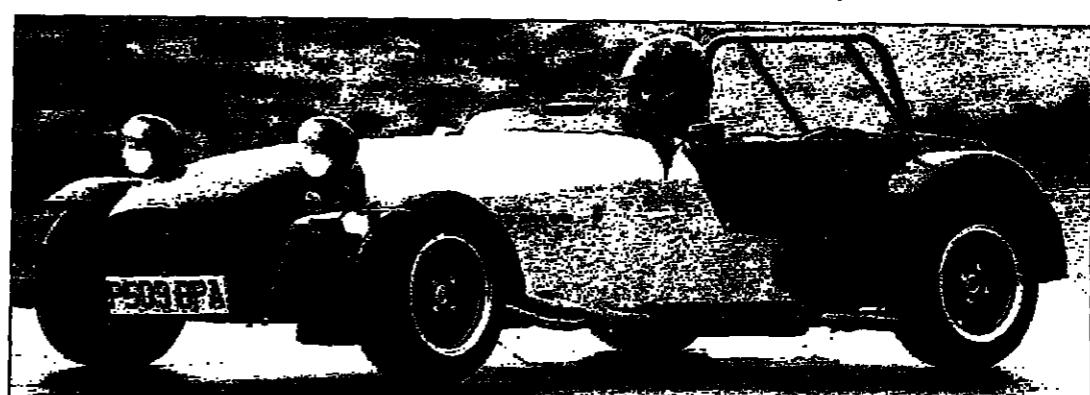
In the past two years TVR has doubled its workforce in Blackpool from 270 to 540. This year, it expects to make 1700 cars in Britain and probably 500 in Malaysia, an astonishing record for a company once associated with kit cars.

Its own engine range is extended even further with a new six-cylinder unit being added to the Griffith range.

Another success story is the Caterham company who took over the manufacturing rights



TVR's new supercar, codenamed project 12/7, won three orders within hours of being unveiled, even though its 7-litre V12 engine is yet to run. It's designed for road and race



Marcos's Mantis, left, is aimed at America. Caterham, above, has an anniversary Super Seven

to the original Lotus 7 in 1973. They are showing two new cars, the Anniversary, a special edition to mark the 40th year since the Lotus Super Seven made its debut at the London Motor Show and the Superlight, designed to drive

like a racer but be road legal. Powered by a 1.6-litre Rover K-series engine it will go from 0-60mph in 4.7 seconds (that's faster than a new Lotus Elise) and costs £17,495.

Graham Nearn, managing director of Caterham, said this

year the company is expecting to complete 650 cars against a predicted 580, half of them for export, with Japan the largest market. Another ten jobs are likely to be created at its Dartford, Kent, factory where it already employs 60 people,

and in addition the company will be opening next month a new showroom in Caterham, Surrey.

The Marcos company, based in Westbury, Wiltshire, and once famous as the maker of a car with a plywood

chassis, also launched its new model, the Mantis, developed from the LM500 which won its class at Le Mans. Powered by a 4.9-litre V8 Shelby Ford engine, the car should help the company break into the American market. Jeremy Kearns, sales manager, said five orders had been placed the day the car was unveiled.

The company's production this year will total between 80 and 100 cars but over the next three or four years, capacity will be increased to 300.

SHOW SHORTS

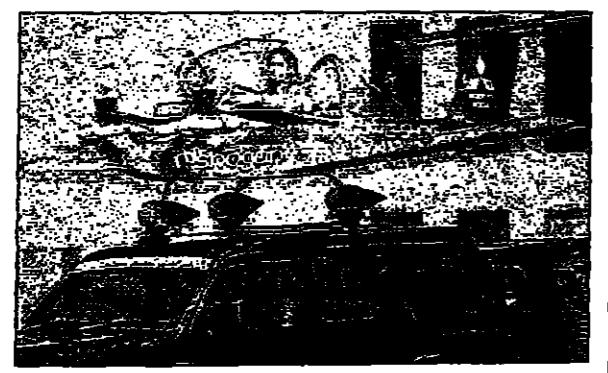
Stars sell cars

■ STARS COME at a price, writes Kevin Eason. Volvo wanted Val Kilmer to publicise their new coupé in his new film as the Saint by appearing on the motor show stand on press day. Rumours say the Swedes choked when Kilmer demanded \$1 million for the day's work.

Stars abounded nevertheless, expensively paid to attract attention, often to some less than starry cars: Noel Edmunds for Land Rover, Jeremy Clarkson for TVR and Bob Monkhouse,

who appeared for Daihatsu but disclosed he was buying a new Jaguar XK8, while Seal had one of those Wonderbra girls, whose name nobody can remember — but who needs to?

Des Lynam was there, but I can't remember why, and Margarita Pracaban, a formidable Latin lady, was on the Daewoo stand, being paid pots of money because she sings out of tune. Can't understand that one: I sing badly out of tune and I would have done the job for half the price.



■ MITSUBISHI caused furrowed brows by announcing it had brought the world's smallest aircraft carrier to Britain. It turned out to be a Shogun 4x4 converted to carry a small French aerobatic plane. Unbelievably, the aircraft takes off from the roof. What will they think of next... and why?

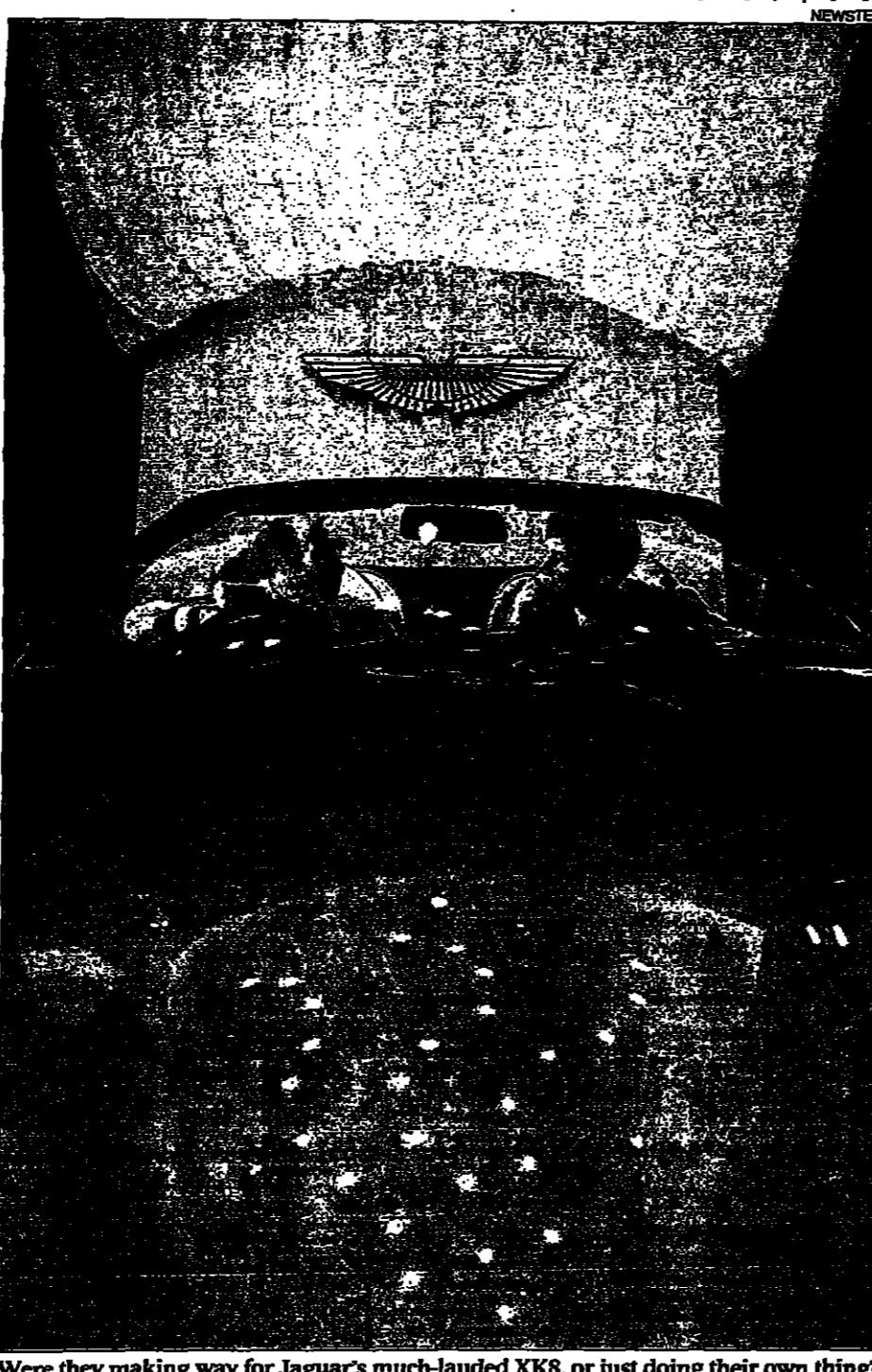
■ Things to do if you get bored looking at cars: Make a bid for the classic Le Mans-winning Bentley 'Old Number One', on the NGK Spark Plug stand. Offers are invited in the region of £1.5million. That's about £1.3million more than any new Bentley.

Get your shoes shined: if they are looking a bit scuffed after all that lurking round the halls, make for the accessories pavilion. A team of polishers on the stand of Renapur, makers of Leather Balsam, will happily demonstrate its polishing and waterproofing properties on your shoes.

■ GET A NEW insurance quote: after settling its problems with Names, Lloyd's of London is represented at the show for the first time, reminding visitors that it has 15 per cent of the British motor insurance market, twice as much as any rival.

Take up smoking: only if you are a registered punter aged 18 plus can you enter the draw for a Renault Megane Coupe on the Rothmans Williams stand, or for a free trip to the Italian Grand Prix with Marlboro McLaren.

There's no point in going to the motor show unless you can carry away a bag full of dreams. Of the best places to get one, Seat wins on capacity with a double-depth plastic carrier, but first prize must go to Citroën for the sheer élan of this silver shoulder bag with fetching red string.



Were they making way for Jaguar's much-lauded XK8, or just doing their own thing?

Aston runs its own show

■ One of the great names of British motoring is surprisingly absent from the show. But in a luxury complex on the other side of Birmingham from the National Exhibition Centre, Aston Martin has been staging a show of its own by invitation only, writes Alan Cops.

At the Belfry Hotel, and Golf Course, customers nominated by Aston Martin dealers have been able not just to view the cars but to be driven in them by staff from a school run by ex-racing driver Peter Gethin.

When the doors of the NEC opened on Tuesday, there was a certain amount of speculation about Aston Martin's absence. The company, after

all, is owned by Ford, which also owns Jaguar — and the Jaguar XK8 is the undisputed star of the show. Hardly a critic has raised a voice against the XK8, except for a few who have carp about its close resemblance to the much more expensive, but equally lauded, Aston Martin DB7. Had big brother Ford asked Aston Martin to leave the stage clear for Jaguar?

Unfounded speculation, say the people at Aston Martin's headquarters in Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire. "This was a marketing and dealership decision. We decided this year to do things a little differently. At the Belfry we've got the same cars we would have had at the show,

but this way potential customers can be driven in them rather than just looking," said PR executive, Barbara Prince. "I think it is quite a brave decision. Ten years ago we wouldn't have dared try such a thing, but now with the security of the Ford link we can try something different. There's certainly a place in the market for both cars. Jaguar are talking about producing 12,000 a year. We haven't made that many cars in our history."

"Anyway the cars have already appeared side-by-side this year at the Geneva motor show." Aston Martin's private show also offers customers a free shuttle service across the NEC.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE SHOW



The Mercedes-Benz SLK is on our must-see list

■ THERE ARE more new cars to see at the motor show than ever before. Sports cars litter the stands but there are models to suit every taste. So Car 96 has selected the essential cars to see.

■ SPORTS CARS: Jaguar XK8, Mercedes SLK roadster, Porsche Boxster, Lotus Elise, Ferrari 550 Maranello, BMW Z3 roadster, Plymouth Prowler, Caterham Anniversary 7, Mitsubishi 3000GT, Porsche GT1, Speciale R42, Marcos Mantis

■ PEOPLE-CARRIERS: Chrysler Voyager, Renault Espace, Mercedes V-class, Renault Megane, Scenic, Seat Alhambra.

■ CONCEPTS: 2096 Slug, Alfa Romeo Nuova, Daewoo Mya, Citroën Berlingo

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CAR 36

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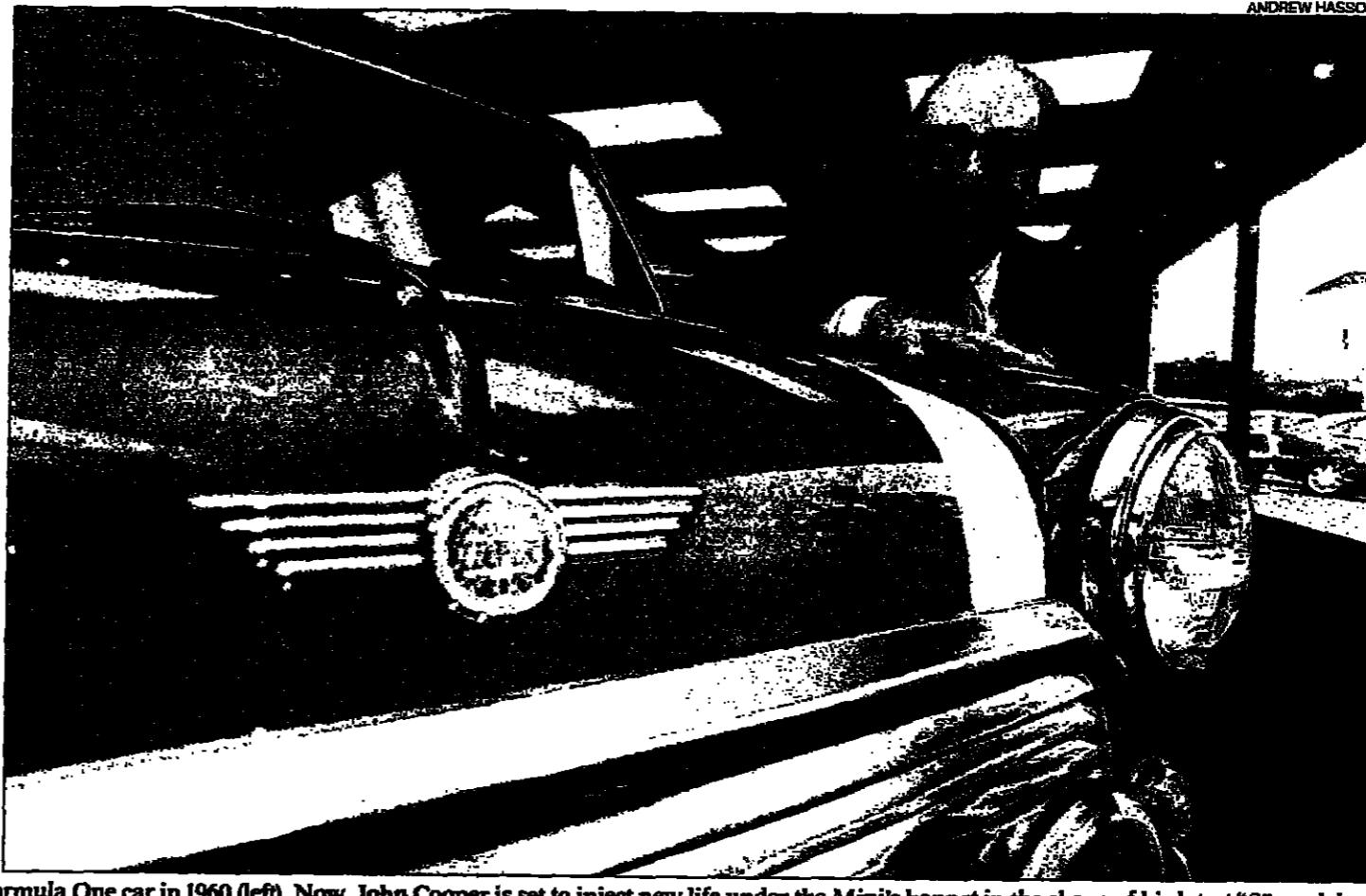
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13

Somewhere in southern England a legend is at work on Rover's latest version, says Vaughan Freeman



Jack Brabham takes the salver after winning his second World Championship in a Cooper-built Formula One car in 1960 (left). Now, John Cooper is set to inject new life under the Mini's bonnet in the shape of his latest "S" model



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Cooperman and the flying Mini

A new generation of Mini Cooper S cars is to be born, according to John Cooper, the man who should know. Cooper developed one of the trendiest cars of the Sixties, the all-conquering Cooper S, yet 30 years on, shows no signs of slowing down.

From his base in the unlikely setting of Ferring, a dot on the map close to the West Sussex coastal resort of Worthing, John Cooper still builds Cooper S cars for customers worldwide at the rate of two a week.

At the same time, he runs a major Honda franchise, a link that dates to the early 1960s when his Cooper Car firm effectively built Honda's first four-wheeled machine, a 1.5-litre Formula One car, at a time when the Japanese firm was building only motorcycles.

As the crowds flock to view the new Mini and Mini Cooper on the Rover stand at the British International Motor Show this week, the indefatigable Cooper will be busy finalising his plans to start turning the official Rover Mini Cooper into the Cooper S models which will go on sale early in the new year. Today his Cooper S cars cost £10,475, against £9,000 for the new Mini. They soon became firm friends.

Cooper, although his 1997 "S" is likely to be slightly dearer.

The new Cooper S will be more powerful, with 35bhp compared with the Rover Mini Cooper's 63bhp, and considerably faster, reaching 0-60mph in under ten seconds, with a top speed of around 100mph against 90mph. Key to the "S" allure will be the uprated acceleration thanks to a five-speed gearbox, and the distinctive badging so reminiscent of the past glories of British motor racing.

Although half of the 25,000 so

Minis still sold each year by Rover are Coopers, and the Mini Cooper racing heritage is second to none, the car was almost never born. Engineering genius and Mini inventor, Sir Alec Issigonis, did not believe a high-performance version of his new baby would sell.

But John Cooper, whose Cooper Climax cars took Jack Brabham to the Formula One World Championship titles in 1959 and 1960, and whose Cooper Car company was once the world's largest builder of racing cars, had other ideas. He had met Sir Alec when the two were young men, racing their cars drag-strip style at the annual Madeira Drive seafront event in Brighton. They soon became firm friends.

Faced with the idea of a racing Mini, Sir Alec told his friend to take away a Mini and work on it, still to be convinced that more than a handful would sell, and highly sceptical that 1,000 customers could be found. One thousand sales was the magic figure that would enable the car to be homologated and thus become eligible for saloon car races and rallies.

The Mini was launched in 1959 and the Mini Cooper took to the road in 1961 with a tweaked Formula Junior racing version of the basic 1-litre, A-series Mini engine (still used in vastly improved form in today's car) and with what were then considered the new-fangled disc brakes.

Faster and more powerful even

than the Cooper was the Cooper S, with 70bhp, and 107cc, bred for racing and rallying, which arrived in 1963. A year later it took Paddy Hopkirk to the first of three Monte Carlo rally wins. There should have been four but the rally organisers, perhaps miffed that such a diminutive car kept scooping all the silverware, deleted a fourth victory from the record books in a row over headlight.

In a deal agreed over a handshake, John Cooper got a £2 royalty for every Cooper version sold by BMC – the amalgam of Austin and Morris – as well as money for parts and cars for his Cooper S racing stable. Despite Sir Alec's fears, the Cooper sold and sold, and by the time Lord Stokes killed the car off in 1971,

around 150,000 had been bought – at £2 a time for their originator.

Though corporate business killed off the Cooper, Cooper the man was considerably more difficult to put down and it is largely thanks to John Cooper's persistence that today's Mini Cooper exists at all.

The cars he exported to the passionate Anglophile Japanese market convinced Rover executives in Japan to commission him to build a 1275cc Mini Cooper in big numbers. Rover here was wary, so he went ahead instead with 1,000cc tuning kits and eventually sold 1,500 of them. Even the crude crates in which the tuning kits were packed became objects of Cooperabilia in Japan, where they were turned into coffee tables and bookcases.

The market for the Cooper was still out there, and John Cooper made the point strongly to the Rover management. After rigorous market research by Rover, the Mini Cooper returned in carburetted 1275cc form in 1990 and John Cooper launched the complementary "S" pack. The door opened by John Cooper leads straight to the new Mini Cooper.

So what does he think of the latest incarnation of his Mini Cooper baby? He says: "I know it is getting expensive. There are still people though who love the Mini because it is fun to drive."

The new car has various improvements, such as the front seats which fold as well as tilt forward to make it easier to get into the back. It is much quieter because the radiator has been moved to the front of the engine with an electric fan which robbed it of about three horsepower. There is an airbag, side-impact bars in the door, and higher gear ratios to help make motorway driving more enjoyable.

"It is a great little car; it's quiet, it's fun, it still handles and feels like a Mini, and I am sure it will carry on until the end of the century when the new Mini arrives."

Already John Cooper is thinking ahead. Rover, makers of the Mini, is now owned by BMW, where Bernd Pischetsrieder, a self-confessed Mini addict and nephew of Issigonis, is in charge.

John Cooper has met the BMW chairman a number of times, and though BMW recently announced that the new Mini would be built from the turn of the century using engines built in Brazil by BMW in conjunction with Chrysler, Cooper says: "My own ideal would be to have the new Mini using Rover's own K-Series engines. That would give a range of cars from 1.1-litre to 1.8-litres. Imagine a Cooper S with the 1.8-litre K-series engine which Rover is using now in its MGF sports cars. That engine gives a thumping 143bhp! Quite enough I think to get the Mini Cooper S back into international competition."

The ideas do not end there: he would also like to see the Mini get power steering, a hatchback-style rear door, longer wheelbase and Hydragas suspension. Like the Mini itself, the passing years only serve to make 73-year-old John Cooper and the 37-year-old Mini fresher and greener.

Icon still pedals ideas



JULIAN HARTNOLL

STEERING COLUMN
Suspension pioneer Alex Moulton tells Hilary Stone why driving is a waste of time

The two names go together as icons of British motoring: when Sir Alec Issigonis designed the Mini, he turned to Alex Moulton to design a brilliant solution to packing a suspension system, which would offer a comfortable ride, into such a small space. Moulton created the amazingly compact and effective rubber cone suspension.

His influence is still felt with his Hydragas suspension fitted to the Rover 100 and MGF. The Mini was born in part out of the Suez Crisis and petrol rationing. So, too, was the Moulton bicycle. Moulton had bought a lightweight bike to ride around on to save petrol but decided he could improve it and the Moulton bicycle with small wheels and rubber suspension was born in 1962.

Its mood fitted perfectly the Sixties and the age's obsession with quirky British design. In 1983 he launched a new series of high-performance small-wheeled bikes, the AM series, which is still made on his estate in Bradford-on-Avon.

What was your first car?

My first car was one I built with a Locomobile steam engine with a flash boiler. I drove it up and down the estate. I followed this with an Austin Seven.

What cars do you drive now?

I always have a variety of cars because my work involves consultancy with the automotive industry. I currently have a Rover 100, which is the latest version of the Metro which has our suspension. I have a Citroen GSA, which has excellent and very interesting sus-

What is your worst habit in the car?

Passengers always complain when I put my hand over the air slots to see if there's any air coming out. They don't seem to like that, though I think it's perfectly reasonable.

What infuriates you most about other drivers?

Simply aggression in driving.

What is the most unusual thing you have done in a car?

To be marooned in a car during a bombing raid in the war. We tried to decide whether it was safer in the car or out, but stayed put.

What is your dream car?

There isn't really one. I always have a range of cars according to the type of driving I am considering. I am pretty impressed with the Bentley Turbo.

What do you like about driving?

If you were the Secretary of State for Transport, what is the first thing you would do?

I would raise the motorway speed limit to 80mph; the 70mph limit is rather mocking nowadays. Secondly, I would give every form of improved facility to move about freely. I think that is going to happen.

Money man wins £10,000



David Rokov (pictured left) kept his lead and won our FI Fantasy Drive with 8,450 points. David, a financial adviser who lives with his wife, Carol, near Bracknell, Berkshire, plans to spend his £10,000 cash prize in two ways: "I will put most into a unit trust scheme for our new baby who is due in a few weeks. And with the rest I'll buy Premium Bonds," he said. David's final winning team, he changed drivers a number of times, was:

Hill, Villeneuve,

M

Verstappen, Lam

Rosset, Brundle,

D

Hill, Brundle,

M

Verstappen, Rosset,

D

Hill, Brundle,

M

Verstappen, Rosset,

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Hill, Brundle,

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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

Lending figures show signs of fatigue

By JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

THE British consumer revival appears to have lost some steam, with a clutch of lending figures from banks and building societies yesterday showing some weakening in borrowing.

Building society gross mortgage advances fell to £3.45 billion in September compared with £3.81 billion in August. Net advances dipped to £1.11 billion (£1.35 billion). In spite of these falls, the Building Societies Association noted that gross advances were still 30 per cent higher than a year ago and that the housing market recovery is well established.

Adrian Coles, director-general of the BSA, noted that new mortgage approvals, although slightly lower than August's figure, are still at high levels, and this suggests that the housing recovery will continue into the winter. There was also good news on savings, with an inflow of £512 million to societies in September, the strongest inflow since October last year.

Separate figures from the British Bankers Association showed that lending by leading British banks rose £2.45 billion in September, against £3.07 billion in August, and the average over the past six months of £3.32 billion.

The lending component of M4 money supply was also somewhat weak. Lending rose £3.5 billion, significantly lower than the £5.4 billion for August, according to Bank of England figures. M4 money supply rose 0.8 per cent. Its annual growth was 9.8 per cent, against 9.4 per cent in August — further above the Government's 3 to 9 per cent monitoring range. However, economists noted that M4 was boosted by an inflow of funds into sterling and that underlying growth may be easing.

Tim Congdon, a member of the Chancellor's independent forecasting panel, called for a 1 per cent rise in interest rates. He said raising rates now would avert the need for more drastic action later. Professor Congdon is concerned that a Clarke boomerang is being created for political reasons in the run-up to the election.



Playing cupid: Mike O'Brien, left, a Labour Treasury spokesman, and Richard Hammond, managing director of Business Blind Date, at the launch of the company, which aims to marry businesses and "angel" investors

UniChem rebids for Lloyds Chemists

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

UNICHEM launched a fresh £638.8 million bid for Lloyds Chemists yesterday after the Department of Trade and Industry gave it the green light. M4 money supply rose 0.8 per cent. Its annual growth was 9.8 per cent, against 9.4 per cent in August — further above the Government's 3 to 9 per cent monitoring range. However, economists noted that M4 was boosted by an inflow of funds into sterling and that underlying growth may be easing.

Dieter Kammerer, chairman of Gehe, attacked the UniChem offer, saying: "We believe UniChem would face significant risks in acquiring Lloyds Chemists given the relative size of the two companies."

Jeffrey Harris, chief executive of UniChem, described

Gehe's statement as "rather silly" and added: "Why don't they get on with it and make a bid? They should put their money where their mouth is."

The DTI said that UniChem and Gehe had fulfilled the conditions it had laid down in July by agreeing to sell much of Lloyds' pharmaceutical wholesaling operations, and it approved UniChem and Gehe's lists of around 20 prospective purchasers.

Gehe said it remains interested in acquiring the business, but stopped short of making a new bid. Lloyds advised its shareholders to take no action for the time being. A cash bid by Gehe is widely expected to be announced shortly.

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Jeffrey Harris, chief executive of UniChem, described

chain, makes most of its income from prescription pharmaceuticals. Lloyds shares rose 17p to 521p.

UniChem's bid has the same basic structure as the one that lapsed in March when it was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. For every ten Lloyds ordinary shares, it is offering 16 new UniChem shares and 92p in cash. This price each Lloyds ordinary share at 491p.

For each Lloyds preference share, it is offering 59.742p in cash and 1.0323 new UniChem ordinary shares. This values each preference share at 316.8p. UniChem, which is being advised by UBS and BZW, said there will be no special dividend and there is no underwritten cash alternative.

UniChem said the acquisition should be "materially earnings enhancing after the first 12 months". It has increased its rationalisation costs forecast from £26 million to £34 million.

Gehe, which is being advised by Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said that UniChem had no experience of integrating an acquisition as large as Lloyds Chemists.

UniChem first bid for Lloyds, which has more than 900 retail pharmacies — making it second in size only to Boots — in January last year. Gehe then entered with a rival bid in February, prompting a higher bid by Lloyds. Gehe then increased its bid.

Analysts noted that UniChem's new bid was not described by the company as final.

UniChem said the acquisition should be "materially earnings enhancing after the first 12 months". It has increased its rationalisation costs forecast from £26 million to £34 million.

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BUSINESS TODAY

Virgin Direct to sell pensions

By CAROLINE MERRELL

VIRGIN DIRECT, the financial services division of Richard Branson's Virgin empire, is moving into personal pensions.

Announcing the launch of the personal pension, Mr Branson said there was a huge gap between consumer requirements and what the pensions industry had to offer.

Virgin Direct already provides life insurance and personal equity plans (Peps). The pension will be simple, low-cost and will be based on a fund that tracks the UK index. Virgin is entering an industry

that has proved highly controversial after allegations that hundreds of thousands of people were wrongly advised to leave lucrative occupational pension schemes and take out personal pensions. Also, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the State will not be able to support the aging population that has to offer.

Mr Branson, who was valued at more than £1.6 billion last weekend, said the pensions industry had "let greed get the better of them" in the past. Increased competition was the answer, he said.

Asda p...p...picks up a court date

By CLARE STEWART

AFTER cod wars and lamb wars, a new form of food rage is set to break out. P.P.E... Penguin wars. United Biscuits' pizzas to frozen food giant and makers of the familiar Penguin biscuit, has launched a legal action against Asda in a bid to halt sales of the supermarket's own-label Puffin biscuits.

United Biscuits says it has no option but to take legal action to defend its brand. "We respect Asda's right to introduce own-label brands but in this case we believe and have been advised that Asda has stepped over the line," said the

Amec talks target French holding

By GEORGE SIVELL

AMEC, the British building group that less than a year ago fought off a bid from Kvaerner and made an unsuccessful offer for Alfred McAlpine, yesterday revealed that it was in talks to buy a stake in Spie Batignolles, the French electrical and construction business.

Any resulting deal, however, is subject to approval by Schneider, the holding company that controls Spie. Amec intends to take a substantial minority investment in Spie on the same terms as the Spie management. Amec would ultimately aim for a controlling

stake and float the French operation on the stock market.

Amec put no figure on the size of the investment but said it would be met from resources.

Amec shares reacted with a 2p fall to 106.5p. Peter Mason, chief executive of Amec, said the combined group was expected to have

sales of £5 billion a year and would give Amec access to new markets in oil, gas and pharmaceuticals.

Last year Schneider took over the property development assets of Spie in a management and financial restructuring.

The best way now is for the matter to be resolved independently as quickly as possible," said Mr Reed.

Puffins are priced at 85p. Asda has no plans to withdraw its biscuits. "We have spoken at length with United Biscuits but failed to reach agreement.

Asda is selling a seven-pack of Puffins for 67p a pack of 12. The two sides in the High Court action are due to meet on Monday.

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One more chance for private investors to take root?

Nine years ago this weekend the Black Monday stock market crash knocked the wind out of private investors. As a dramatic and portentous metaphor, the winds had raged over southern England causing equivalent financial damage and havoc to many. But at that stage we did not realise the long-term effect that the flight of the global markets was going to have. For us in Britain, we were just in the process of nursing and nurturing the new fresh participants to the stock market who had been investing in their millions in the privatisation campaign.

Over the past few years millions of new investors had been drawn into direct equity investment through the enticing cries of the privatisation advertising campaigns. Individuals who had

never ventured further than the building society and National Savings were attracted to the seemingly guaranteed returns of these levitarian share issues.

In the run up to Big Bang, which had occurred the year before, and throughout 1987 the likes of British Gas, British Airways, BT and BAA had swelled the number of burgeoning stock market investors. Never had the securities industry seen such an intensive period of growth, never had it had such an opportunity, and never before was it quite so ill prepared. The question was, would it ever be able to take full advantage of it.

As the investment enthusiasm of the small private investors grew, so did the underlying factors that eventually were to cause the financial earthquake of that October. In Britain the

growing knowledge of these millions of nursery investors was, however, all too shallow, and stocks were seen as a form of punting where the dice always rolled your way. Thus when disaster struck, their reaction was all the more depressing.

Overnight, the stock market for many went from being a benign albeit distant and mysterious beast, into a patently dangerous institution run by the few for the benefit of others. Overnight the goodwill and confidence of the burgeoning investors was blown away in the allegorical gale of the previous weekend. Overnight investment intentions reverted to the safer if somewhat lacklustre havens of the deposit account.

Ever since it has been my belief that the after shocks of the Crash caused not only many

investors to stay away altogether, but ensured that others merely kept their share investment just to the privatisations. The figures of shareholding which show the growth since 1979 to over ten million, also highlight the fact

that most have only one or two holdings, and that pitiful few ever went on to buy any other shares outside the Government offers.

So has it all been a failure? A great idea crippled by an unfortunately timed stock market crash? No, the issue cannot be blamed on just the vicissitudes of the markets, nor even the meteorological conditions of southern England. Our stock market industry itself has to take much of the responsibility. Faced with this gigantic crèche of nursery investors, the industry's answer was purely transactional. Bargain volumes dictated that there was little time for the niceties of advice and support. It was the time of fast trading (and slow settlement) and quick share turnarounds, and if the young investors didn't understand, well

they could come back when they had a "proper portfolio".

Over the years since, we have seen great developments in faster execution-only dealing, but all too rarely have we seen the industry take real advantage of these newcomers to help them to grow their assets over a long period of time. The commission earning culture may be easier for stockbrokers to handle, but it is not the way to grow and develop your market or necessarily your customers.

But all is not lost. Someone has forgiven us our sins, for we have been given one more chance to put right the wrongs of our previous actions. Next year, 1997, is due to see the flotation of some of the largest institutions in Britain. The demutualisation of some building societies and the Norwich Union will lead to yet

another vast influx of small investors.

This time let's hope the industry is better prepared to serve these newcomers, not by just treating them as the old privatisation participants, but as the future investors in the market both directly and indirectly. Here is the opportunity to bridge the gap between the deadening effect of the deposit account and variability of the equity market. By using its imagination the industry can work to grow its customer base and not just fritter it away on short-term commission windfalls.

We must make sure then that these investors have a chance to take root and not be blown away by another stock market storm.

Justin Urquhart Stewart is director of Barclays Stockbrokers Ltd

EXECUTIVE VOICE



Justin Urquhart Stewart

K&S and Gerrard to merge

GERRARD & National Holdings and King & Shaxson, the rival finance groups, are to merge in a £54 million deal (Clare Stewart writes).

The agreed bid will create one of the largest private client stockbroking groups, bringing together the broking businesses of Gerrard Vivian Gray and Greig Middleton, with about £10 billion of funds under management.

The terms of the deal offer 17 Gerrard shares for 25 K&S shares, valuing the latter at 203.3p each. K&S is valued at £84.9 million.

Gerrard shares fell 27p to 272p; K&S rose 20p to 182.5p. *Tempus*, page 30

Japanese trade surplus plunges

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT IN TOKYO

JAPAN'S huge trade surplus plunged 41.6 per cent in the first half of fiscal 1996, the biggest decline in 16 years, as imports continued to grow faster than exports.

Japan's global trade surplus for the April-September period dropped to ¥2.90 trillion (£16.3 billion), the smallest surplus since the second half of fiscal 1983, the finance ministry said yesterday.

Higher crude oil prices and a big increase in imports of personal computers and office equipment contributed to the 25.1 per cent rise in Japan's import bill, while exports were up 8.6 per cent. Japan's car

industry increased overseas sales 15.4 per cent.

The trade surplus with the European Union in the six-month period declined 42.8 per cent from the year earlier, falling for the eighth consecutive six-month period in a row.

Japan saw its bilateral trade surplus with the US fall 24.2 per cent due largely to rising imports of office equipment and electronic devices.

Economists said that the figures were good news for President Clinton, who is seeking re-election next month, and Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Japanese Prime Minister, as he heads into a general elec-

Tempus, page 30



Sir Christopher Lewinton believes that the offer is fair to Forsheda's shareholders

Scottish TV offer cleared

Scottish Television was yesterday cleared to complete its £120 million offer for Caledonian Publishers, which owns *The Herald* in Glasgow, after it gave assurances that David Montgomery, chief executive of Mirror Group, which has 20 per cent of Scottish, would have no influence on the running of Caledonian.

Abbot expands

Abbot Group, the oil services company, is to buy Nabors Europe for £24.7 million. Nabors Europe, which provides drilling and engineering services, operates nine rigs for Chevron, Elf and Oryx. The deal will be part financed by a one-for-five placing and open offer at 83p per share.

Market floats

The Australian Stock Exchange cleared the way to becoming the first publicly listed stock exchange in the world yesterday after more than 96 per cent of its members voted in favour of transferring ownership from stockbrokers to shareholders.

Deficit narrows

The US trade deficit narrowed to \$10.8 billion in August (\$11.6 billion in July), but was well above Wall Street predictions of a \$8.5 billion deficit.

Setback for TI bid

BY OLIVER AUGUST

TI GROUP has suffered a setback in its bid for Forsheda, the Swedish engineering company. TI's £189 million takeover offer was yesterday rejected by Henderson Investors, which controls 13 per cent of Forsheda.

Stephen Peak, a Henderson fund manager, said: "While the TI bid represents a handsome return on our invest-

ment, we would be doing our own investors a disservice by not seeking a better price."

TI Group, whose chairman is Sir Christopher Lewinton, said: "We believe that the offer is full and fair to Forsheda shareholders."

It has been recommended by the Forsheda board. The offer will remain open until November 8.

TOURIST RATES

Bank	Bank	Bank	Bank
Boys	Sells	Malls	Sells
Australia S	2.09	1.93	0.561
Austria Sch	18.17	16.67	2.860
Belgium Fr	53.24	48.94	2.118
Canada Dlr	2.09	2.04	10.03
Cyprus Cyp	0.7748	0.7198	22.00
Denmark Kr	9.82	9.12	7.78
Finland Mkr	7.88	7.23	189.00
France Fr	1.05	1.01	1.57
Germany Dm	2.594	2.364	1.259
Greece Dr	397	372	158.000
Iceland Isk	12.89	11.89	1.683
Ireland P	1.042	0.992	0.492
Israel Shek	5.54	4.89	2.000
Italy Lira	2548	2391	145800
Japan Yen	192.00	176.00	1.553

Rates for small denomination bank notes supplied by Barclays Bank. Other rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

It's the winner takes all economy: increasing salaries for those who can make a difference, but tough wage restraint for those at the bottom of the scale ...

Business Focus — The Sunday Times, tomorrow

PORTFOLIO

ASIA Fund of Funds

Fixed price offer closes 1st November 1996

PORTFOLIO ASIA FUND is a new unit trust which aims to achieve maximum capital growth from investment in the great growth economies of the Far East. Like the other well-known Portfolio funds it will use the fund of funds principle, aiming to choose the best Asia funds from the best Asia fund managers.

THE ASIAN PHENOMENON

Asia Fund will give investors access to some of the world's most dynamic markets. China is a prospective economic super power. Hong Kong is China's New York. Korea is the Japan of the future. Indonesia has more people than Russia. India produces more computer software than the United States. Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan have taken over from Japan as the leading makers of consumer electronics. Thailand and the Philippines are growing faster than any European union country. Asia Fund will accordingly invest across the whole sweep of these countries, from Korea to India. It may also include Australia, but will avoid Japan.

THE FUND OF FUNDS ADVANTAGE No one fund manager can master all the companies in all the countries in Asia. India alone has 4,000 quoted shares. But individual funds and fund managers can be very good indeed. Portfolio Asia Fund aims to pick out the best of them, organising them into a tax-efficient portfolio in which changes can be made without incurring capital gains tax: even the best of funds can run out of growth and have to be changed for a better one. The fund can include both UK authorised unit trusts and SIB-recognised offshore funds. As with the existing Portfolio funds of funds, selection leans heavily on the analytical work of Fund Research Limited, the leading specialist in assessing the quality of funds and their managers.

Investors should however bear in mind that the value of their investment could go down as well as up.

A PURE CAPITAL GROWTH FUND

The aim of Portfolio Asia Fund is to achieve maximum capital growth. Income is reinvested net of basic rate tax and reflected in the price of units. Higher rate taxpayers may incur a further liability, but this is likely to be small: the estimated initial gross yield is 0.1%. The fund is exempt from Capital Gains Tax on its internal transactions but unitholders may be liable to CGT when they sell units.

HOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST?

Unlike the stockmarkets of Britain, America and much of Europe, Asian markets have recently been unusually depressed. They now represent excellent value. We expect that their growth pattern will soon be renewed.

PATHFINDER PORTFOLIO

The planned portfolio will include regional and single country unit trusts and SIB-recognised Asia funds. The provisional list, which may be subject to change, is as follows:

Fidelity ASEAN, South East Asia
Fidelity Funds Hong Kong & China, Korea, Malaysia
Schroder Far Eastern Growth, Pacific Growth, Seoul
HSBC Asian
HSBC GIC Chinese Equity, Hong Kong Equity,
Singapore Equity
Templeton GS China, Korea
GT China, India, Orient
Credit Suisse Orient
Fleming Flagship China, Eastern Opportunities
Perpetual Asian Smaller Markets
Astrust Far East Emerging Economies
Friends Provident Australia
GAM Asian Funds
Invesco Taiwan Growth

PORTFOLIO'S TRACK RECORD

Portfolio's original Fund of Funds began in December 1989 and is the outstanding fund of funds of the industry. To 31 July 1996 it was the best performing fund of funds since launch, and also over 6 years, 5 years, 4 years and 3 years. (Source: *Hindsight*). Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance, but Portfolio Asia Fund will be run in the same way by the same people although concentrating solely on Asian funds.

FIXED PRICE OFFER

The initial offer of units is at a fixed price of 50p each until Friday 1 November 1996. The minimum investment is £1,000. During the initial offer period there will be a 1% discount on all investments of £3,000 or more, 2% from £10,000 and 3% from £25,000. To invest, complete the coupon and send it, with your cheque, to be received no later than Friday 1 November. Applications received after this will have units allocated at the full offer price next calculated after receipt.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Applications will be acknowledged with a contract note and certificates will be sent within 21 days of the close of the offer. From 4 November, units will be valued and dealt in on a forward basis at 10.00 am daily. When units are sold, cheques will be posted within five days of receipt of the renounced certificate.

Prices will be published every day in the Financial Times, The Times and the Daily Telegraph. The spread between bid and offer prices may be varied within the regulations. The initial charge is 6%. The maximum annual charge is 2%, but the actual charge for the portfolio will be 1.5% plus the cost of the manager's fee, trustee's, auditor's and registrar's fees are paid by the fund. Commission is payable to approved intermediaries: rates are available on request.

The underlying funds bear their own charges. The initial charges are likely to be reduced by negotiation. On the existing Portfolio Fund of Funds the average charge is under 0.5%. In some cases annual charges are reduced as well.

Copies of the Trust Deed and Scheme Particulars are available on request from the Manager. Reports will be published twice yearly. The Trustee is Midland Bank plc, Mariner House, Pepys Street, London EC3N 4DA. Regulated by IMRO.

The Registrars and Administrators are Premier Administration Limited, 5 Rayleigh Road, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 1AA. Telephone: 01277 227300. Fax: 01277 231084. Regulated by IMRO.

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A WORKING WEEK FOR: SIMON SHERWOOD

Fast track to success aboard Orient-Express

Jon Ashworth meets a global player who is determined to ensure that travel to exotic locations should be an instructive experience

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday

SIMON SHERWOOD used to spend his time in cement factories. Now he visits luxury hotels — one of the perks of being president of Orient-Express Hotels. Sherwood, 35, and newly married, spends his life flying round the world, sampling cocktails in Cape Town, and dodging sandbanks on the Irrawaddy. Jobs like this do not appear in the classified ads.

Sherwood's step-father, James, is president of Sea Containers, the Bermuda-registered company that owns Hover-speed, SeaCat and the InterCity East Coast rail franchise, along with a massive container-leasing business. The leisure division takes in some evocative names, from the Cipriani in Venice, to the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, and the British Pullman train service. There is a half-share in Harry's Bar in London, discreet haunt of peers and tycoons, and a full stake in Gametrackers, a collection of safari lodges in the Okavango region of northern Botswana. Trains, river cruisers and lodges alike fall under the banner of Orient-Express Hotels. This is the younger Sherwood's patch.

"So many times when I travel I wake up and I could be in any country in the world," says Sherwood, newly returned from a honeymoon in Ecuador. "A lot of our customers want to have more of an educational and cultural experience. They want to taste the food, they want to see the local life, live a bit of the country, not just go in and tick it off their list."

Orient-Express has been busy snapping up properties and launching new services in the five years since Sherwood joined the family business. The portfolio now includes the "21" club in New York, purchased last November, and Reid's in Madeira, added in July. In Burma, "Road to Mandalay", a luxurious, if controversial, river excursion, is soon to complete its first year's service. A resort in the Caribbean may be next. "We tend to be very opportunistic in what we acquire," says Sherwood. "We're not strategic. We don't say: 'I need five hotels in Asia in the next five years'. We're looking for very unique experiences for our guests, but we're not too bothered with where it is. We'll take the guest to the uniqueness."

From any other mouth, this could be so much corporate *spiel* — but not in Sherwood's case. Dapper and affable, he is eager to chat about life at Sea Containers House, overlooking the Thames in London. Born in Oxford, he went to Bishop's Stortford College, then read natural sciences at Cambridge. "I used to have a wonderful little pet rat, which would come and sit on your shoulder," he recalls. "The only downside to the rat is that it was a total alcoholic. If you were holding a glass of wine it would

come whipping down your arm and dunk its head in. Sweet little rat. No longer with me."

After university, Sherwood spent a couple of years in France, Italy and Spain, brushing up on his languages. In 1986, armed with an MBA from Harvard, he signed up with Boston Consulting Group in San Francisco, finding time for yet another diversion: "I decided to go and teach in China for a bit."

Sherwood ended up in Nanchang in Jiangxi Province on a salary of \$50 a month. "There were 25 westerners in the region, which made me kind of like a movie star. They used to follow you round."

Confusion trailed in his wake. "You can't find your bicycle anywhere because they're all black, so I painted mine red, thinking: 'This is great, I'll be able to find it' — which I could. But the problem was that you're cycling along with everyone else, and a red bicycle and a foreigner is just too much. They all turned and stared at you. So when you got to the end of the road, you turned round, you'd see bicycles everywhere — hit into each other, hit trees..."

Sherwood arrived for work in San Francisco with nowhere to stay. The problem was swiftly resolved. "I met this young lady at a party and she said: 'I've fallen in love with this guy in New York and I'm in New York the whole time, why don't you stay at my flat?'"

Sherwood returned to a palatial apartment with sweeping views over the Bay. His new-found friend handed over the keys, urged him to use her BMW, then dashed off to catch the 7.30 dash to New York. "Only in San Francisco could that happen," says Sherwood. "I lived there for four years. She got married and then divorced, and moved in, and out and we're great friends."

He relished his time at Boston Consulting. "I loved consulting, absolutely adored it," he says. "I had some wonderful assignments. I worked with a cruise line in Seattle, lived there for six months, [would] go up to the Yukon to give sales and marketing talks." He spent time in Mexico, advising washing machine groups and cement factories.

Sherwood returned to the UK in 1991; without regret, San Francisco allowed him to indulge in sailing, skiing and other passions, including flying. "There's something about being an Englishman in America, and young and single, that is unbeatable." He became vice-president of strategy at Sea Containers, assessing the impact of the Channel Tunnel and other potential threats to business, then turned his eye to the leisure division.

One of his first targets was the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, suffering a dearth of Americans in the aftermath of the Gulf War. "We reduced the schedule considerably, down to the level of the demand," he recalls. "It improved the bottom line result enormously."

The only cloud, as such, looms in South-East Asia, where interests include the Eastern & Oriental Express, which runs between Bangkok and Singapore. A decision to route the train over the Bridge

We're not strategic. We want unique experiences for our guests?



On the occasions that he is not required to visit the company's hotels, Simon Sherwood is based at Sea Containers House overlooking the Thames

Sherwood took charge fully in 1994. Much of his first year was devoted to cutting costs and improving yields, as well as renovating hotels such as the Copacabana Palace in Rio de Janeiro, and the Splendido on the Italian Riviera. A current focus is South Africa, where his interests include the Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town, purchased in 1989 and refurbished at great expense. A new hotel, The Westcliff, opens in Johannesburg next year.

Sherwood spends about half his time "on the road", visiting each of the nearly 20 hotels and attractions at least twice a year. He regularly travels to Heathrow by taxi-motorcycle, strapping his luggage on the back.

"I love to travel light. I'm not a motorbike rider at all, but there's a certain thrill," he says, rugging at his mouth with his fingers to simulate a howling slipstream. He flies business class, usually overnight. "I have little pyjamas, put those on; my little teddy bear I take with me as well." Home is in Chelsea.

The only cloud, as such, looms in South-East Asia, where interests include the Eastern & Oriental Express, which runs between Bangkok and Singapore. A decision to route the train over the Bridge

over the River Kwai has angered war veterans. Further north, cruises on the Irrawaddy have angered opponents of the repressive Burmese regime.

Sherwood makes no excuses. Burma has problems, but he is not forcing anyone to go there. "Obviously, we started our investment process in the country before Aung San Suu Kyi was released," he says.

"It takes years to put this together. To some extent, the more recent, and very fundamental, thing of should there be tourism to Burma?" has been something that's come since we got involved in the

country." Bookings have been "quite good", particularly from America, France, Germany and Japan.

Sherwood expects "Road to Mandalay" to make some money next year. "I think people have to make up their own minds," he says. "All I can say is it's a beautiful country, it's a lovely country, and you certainly have no impression of any kind of overbearing military regime."

Sherwood has another reason to feel a special attachment to Burma. He proposed to his then-girlfriend, Tina Curwen, halfway up a pagoda in the ancient city of Pagan. Tina is a dentist and he organised a gynaecologist for her hen night — complete with removable dentures.

The couple were married at Buckland, Oxfordshire, on September 7, and took

over the Sherwood country house for the reception. Intent on avoiding hotels during their honeymoon, the Sherwoods flew to Quito in Ecuador, took a cruise to the Galapagos, ventured into the rainforest, then spent a week sailing off the coast in an old wooden ketch.

Back at his desk, Sherwood is happy to carry on squeezing margins and seizing opportunities. From losing money, Orient-Express Hotels is expected to make about \$30 million this year, on sales of \$300 million. Sherwood is suitably gung-ho. "I really enjoy what I'm doing. I just want to try to keep improving things until they get to such a great stage that the board feels they have to give me a huge bonus, and I can retire to the golf course." His wife may have other ideas.

HIDDEN ASSETS

Squeeze on space leads to triumph of refurbishment

Joanna Pitman views the restoration work that won the Royal a top award

Number One Cornhill, that imposing five-storeyed domed building in the heart of the City of London, has just won a 1996 Heritage Award for the impressive restoration carried out by its owner, the Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Group. Standing our among all the heavy masculine banking architecture of the neighbouring Mansion House and Bank of England, the Royal's building looks soft, rounded and resolutely English. And there is something gently ecclesiastical too about the marbles and the gleaming brass interior of the main banking hall.

The street layout in this exclusive corner of commerce and wealth has barely changed in the past 400 years, and between 1668 and

1724 Number One Cornhill housed a cluster of small buildings including the home and bookshop of Thomas Guy, who made sufficient money selling Bibles to endow the hospital that still carries his name. The only main thoroughfare to have been introduced since Guy's time is King William Street which in the early 1830s carved its way through a maze of little streets, laying waste to City taverns and restaurants and the offices of ancient City fraternities, the saddlers, merchant tailors, haberdashers, wax chandlers, barbers, brewers, coopers and coach-

makers. At about the same time the clustered buildings on the site were replaced by a single block, the "Globe Building", owned by the Globe Insurance Company that had grown rapidly since its founding in London in 1803. Consolidation in the industry in the second half of the 19th century led to the takeover of Globe Insurance by the Liverpool and London Insurance Company in 1864.

As fast-growing insurance firms consumed rivals, their premium incomes ballooned and so did their names, this particular marriage producing The Liverpool and Globe Insurance

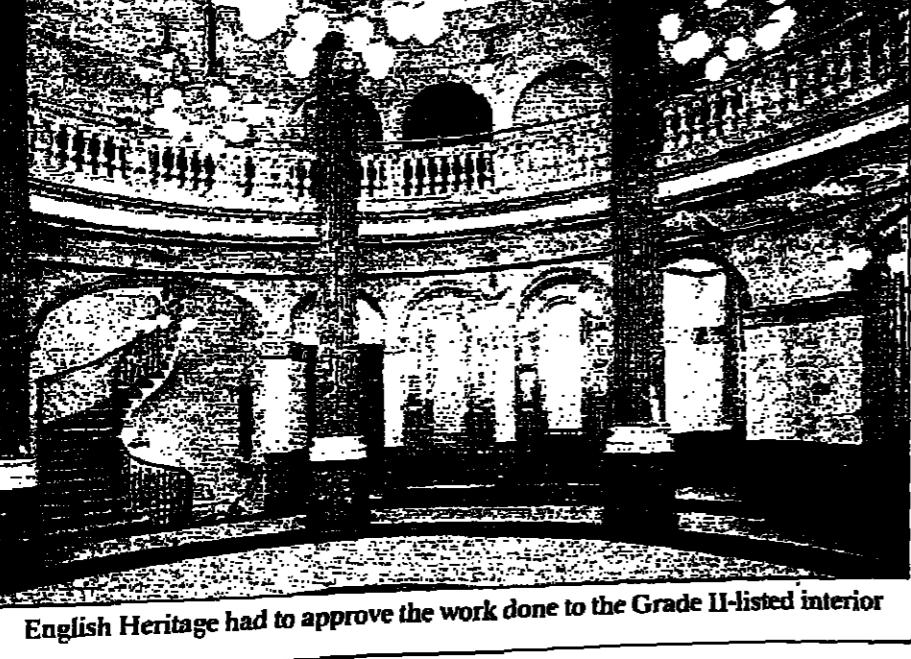
Company. In 1902 the 1830s Globe building was redeveloped. The present building, with its familiar dome, was completed in 1905.

In 1919 acquisition fever struck again and The Liverpool and London and Globe merged with Royal Insurance. The new company became known simply as The Royal Insurance Company. But again more space was required and the group bought the three adjacent buildings in 1936 and 1937, creating what eventually became, in 1981, Royal Insurance's group head office.

The award-winning refurbishment was carried out in 1995-96 to mark the Royal's 150th anniversary. And just in time too, for pressure on the limited office space had become so acute that hundreds of working desks had become tightly wedged on to the floor of the main banking hall.

Refurbishment was essential, but with a Grade II-listed interior it required the nod from English Heritage. Plans were made in accordance with 1905 drawings and Saul Jarrett Partnership were appointed architects.

The six-metre green marble columns were restored along with 14 further marble surfaces and slabs of missing marble cladding were replaced with plaster moulding. New office space has been created, state-of-the-art audio-visual display equipment has been installed, and the exterior of the building cleaned. The refit was completed in early 1996, just in time for the Royal's merger in July with Sun Alliance.



English Heritage had to approve the work done to the Grade II-listed interior

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Investor fatigue shows as shares reach record close

INVESTORS have found little to cheer this week, with share prices on the London stock market advancing to yet another record last night.

The FTSE 100 index was showing signs of running out of steam by the close, reflecting an uncertain start to trading on Wall Street after its latest trade figures. Even so, it finished 110 points up at a new closing high of 4,053.1, a rise on the week of 25 points. By the close of business a total of 682 million shares had changed hands.

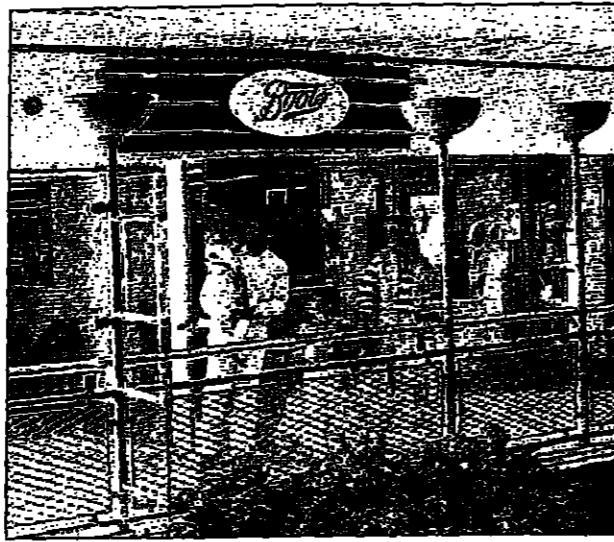
Lloyds Chemists got off to a flying start with a rise of 17p to 521p as UniChem re-launched its bid. It came just minutes after the Government signalled the go-ahead for UniChem to renew its bid battle with the German company Gehe for control of the chain of chemist shops.

Terms of the latest offer value Lloyds at £657 million, or 505p a share. The previous offer lapsed in March after being referred, along with an offer from Gehe, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Now City speculators are waiting to see if Gehe will relaunch its own offer. Gehe said it remained interested in Lloyds. Its previous offer was worth 500p a share. UniChem finished the session 9p cheaper at 249p.

Within minutes of UniChem making its move, the Office of Fair Trading moved to bring an end to the system of resale price maintenance on branded over-the-counter drugs. This left Boots 51p lower at 638p, and Kingfisher, which owns Superdrug, 1p off at 654p. Asda, which started the row in the first place, was marked lower and then recovered to close 1p firmer at 1141p. It later welcomed the move and said it could lead to price cuts on everyday healthcare products that would be worth £300 million to consumers.

SmithKline Beecham, the pharmaceutical manufacturer, slipped 1p to 790p ahead of third-quarter figures next week. A line of one million shares went through the market at 792p. A line of one million Glaxo was also on offer at 1010.10 as the price rose to 1010.5.

Eurotherm enjoyed a markup of 28p to 600p after an upgrade by ABN Amro Hoare Govett, the broker. Rob Harris, analyst at Hoare, has turned bullish of the stock.



The OFT's decision to end RPM left Boots down 51p

raising his recommendation from a "undervalued" to a "buy". He reckons the group will launch a record number of new products during the next few years, providing a big boost to profits. Cash flow is expected to grow sharply between now and the rest of the century, enabling the group to develop in the US. Shareholders may expect to benefit from a £40 million bonus in foreign

News International, publisher of *The Times*, continued to advance towards the 700p mark with a rise of 17p to 691p. The rise comes after some optimistic comments about BSkyB from Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief executive of The News Corporation at its annual meeting. Sears rose 3p to 91p as a line of five million shares went through the market at 91p.

Alpha Airports, the airport caterer where Granada holds a 25 per cent stake, marked time at 101p amid mounting speculation that a number of bids may be about to emerge. City speculation suggests an overseas consortium has been taking a close look at Alpha, but may be pipped at the post by BAA, 111p dearer at 516p.

income dividends this year. Among leaders Rank Organisation came off 51p to 437p after some disappointing numbers from Xerox Corporation, its US associate, that sent its shares plumping \$1 at one point.

Pearson rallied 20p to 6961p as the market continued to reflect on this week's appointment of Marjorie Scardino as the new chief executive.

Johnson Matthey was left looking a little lacklustre with a fall of 11p to 611p after a profits downgrade by UBS, the broker. It has reduced its recommendation for the shares from a "buy" to a "hold" after cutting its profits forecast for the current year by

£100 million. It has also lowered its forecast for 1997 from £136 million to £125 million because of the depressed electronics market and problems at Cookson Matthey.

UBS has also cut its profits forecast for Cookson by 5 million to £85 million, but remains a buyer. Cookson was 3p easier at 2461p.

News of a downturn in first-half profits and a bid for rival King & Shaxson left Gerrard & National, the discount house, nursing a fall of 27p to 272p. King & Shaxson stood out with a jump of 20p to 1821p after digesting the terms from Gerrard valuing the business at £53.7 million.

At the same time pre-tax profits in the first six months at Gerrard slumped by almost half to £6.3 million. The group blamed the decline on the introduction of the gilt repo market, reduced turnover in foreign exchange and increased margin pressure in the derivatives markets.

Market-makers appear to be short of stock in Millennium & Copthorne, the hotel chain, where the price ran up 29p to 552p after a large buy order earlier in the week.

Investors have also begun switching out of Stakis, its rival, down 3p to 96p. Millennium & Copthorne came to market in April at 278p. Stakis has been depressed by talk it will buy the Metropole hotel chain from Louro, unchanged at 164p.

□ GILT-EDGED: Further growth in money supply and worries about a revival of inflationary pressures left prices down on the day. The short end of the market bore the brunt of the losses after a call by Professor Tim Congdon, one of the Chancellor's panel of independent advisers, for a full point rise in interest rates. He said the move was needed to nip inflation in the bud.

In the futures pit, the December series of the long gilt finished £16 lower at £1091.16 as a total of 60,000 contracts were recorded.

Treasury 9 per cent 2015 finished £72 lower at £1002.22, while Treasury 8 per cent 2000 fell £12 to £1032.12.

□ NEW YORK: On Wall Street several top names delivering disappointing results came under selling pressure and by midday the Dow Jones industrial average was 5.97 points lower at 6,052.23.

MOVES OF THE WEEK

Current	Week's Change
Blenheim	+457p
Manchester United	+544p
Airbuses	+633p
Wessex Water	+317p
Wakebourne	+14p
BSkyB	+631p
WH Smith	+471p
Alexander Workwear	+102p
Dixons	+578p

ICIS-LOR (London 6.00pm)

CRUDE OILS (\$/barrel FOB)

PRODUCTS (\$/MT)

Spc CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

Premium Urid

Cash EEC

1.5 Fuel Oil

Naphtha

GAS OIL

BITFEX (GNI) Ltd \$/mt

GASOLINE

BRENT (\$/bbl)

Long Oil

Three Month Sterling

Three Mth Euro Yen

Three Mth Euro

Japanese Govt Bond

German Govt Bond

Three month ECU

Euro Swiss Franc

Italian Govt Bond

Previous open interest: 6,650

Closing Prices Page 43

COMMODITIES

MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION

Average livestock price (representative)

(kg/kg) PIG Sheep Cattle

Gehe 62.26 117.62 101.41

Eng/Swalec 66.16 117.68 101.19

(+/-) 7.42 +2.73 +0.86

(%) +9.20 -1.0 -0.50

Sheep 103.00 110.00 101.00

(+/-) -2.21 -1.47

(%) +48.20 0.00 0.00

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

WHEAT (class 1/2)

BARLEY (class 1/2)

Period Open High Low Sett Vol

FT-SE 100

Previous open interest: 6,005

FT-SE 250

Previous open interest: 3,971

Three Month Sterling

Previous open interest: 4,920

Three Mth Euro Yen

Previous open interest: 3,185

Three Mth Euro

Previous open interest: 3,085

Three Month ECU

Previous open interest: 3,050

Three Month Swiss Franc

Previous open interest: 2,940

Three Month Japanese Yen

Previous open interest: 2,890

Three Month Canadian Dollar

Previous open interest: 2,850

Three Month Australian Dollar

Previous open interest: 2,810

Three Month New Zealand Dollar

Previous open interest: 2,770

Three Month Norwegian Krone

Previous open interest: 2,730

Three Month Danish Krone

Previous open interest: 2,700

Three Month Swedish Krona

Previous open interest: 2,670

Three Month Italian Lira

Previous open interest: 2,640

Three Month Spanish Peseta

Previous open interest: 2,610

Three Month Portuguese Escudo

Previous open interest: 2,580

Three Month Greek Drachma

Previous open interest: 2,550

Three Month Turkish Lira

Previous open interest: 2,520

Three Month Mexican Peso

Previous open interest: 2,490

Three Month Argentine Peso

Previous open interest: 2,460

Three Month Chilean Peso

Previous open interest: 2,430

Three Month South African Rand

Previous open interest: 2,400

Three Month Australian Dollar

Previous open interest: 2,370

Three Month Canadian Dollar

Previous open interest: 2,340

Three Month British Pound

Previous open interest: 2,310

Three Month French Franc

Previous open interest: 2,280

Three Month German Mark

Previous open interest: 2,250

Three Month Italian Lira

Previous open interest: 2,220

Three Month Japanese Yen

Previous open interest: 2,190

Three Month New Zealand Dollar

Previous open interest: 2,160

Three Month Norwegian Krone

THE TIMES SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996



HERE WE GO 33

Football fans
dribble all the
way to the bank

WEEKEND
MONEY

TESSA'S A STAR 39

Her public
calls for more
of the same



Borrowers face a stressful and unnecessarily long wait for mortgages, says Sara McConnell

Home groans as
lenders dawdleBeat the
mortgage
system by
making a
flying start

WHEN you apply for a mortgage, you can save time by getting and giving as much information as possible at the beginning.

London & Country Mortgages has supplied the following questions for Weekend Money readers to ask lenders:

- How long will it take for you to produce a full written mortgage offer?
- Is the loan portable if I wish to move during the commitment period?
- What is your ordinary variable rate?
- Do you charge an indemnity guarantee premium? If so, how much is it?
- Can this premium be added to the loan? If so, up to what percentage?
- What is the lock-in period on the loan I am interested in?
- Are there any other charges on top of early redemption penalties during the lock-in period?
- Do I have to take out compulsory insurance with you?
- Will you include regular bonuses and overtime when working out how much I can borrow?
- Do I have to pay a valuation fee, and can you give me details of costs of more thorough surveys?
- Can my solicitor act for you as well as me?
- What is the cost of stamp duty on properties over £60,000?

London & Country suggests: "If you have not found a specific property but know how much you are likely to want to borrow, ask the lender for some costings in advance. Ask if it will accept an application before you make an offer on a property, with no fees or commitment on your part. This way they can do the necessary credit checks and obtain your references ready for when you do find somewhere."

Desperate borrowers are having to wait months for mortgage offers from major lenders who claim they have been caught unaware by the upturn in the housing market. Some borrowers risk losing their chosen property because they do not have funds in place to complete quickly.

Such delays are certain to tarnish the gloss of cheap mortgage deals designed to tempt reluctant buyers back into the market. In some cases, as at the Bristol & West Building Society, lenders offering the cheapest deals have not been able to handle the extra volumes of business attracted by the marketing hype.

One Weekend Money reader applied for a mortgage from the Royal Bank of Scotland in July. It took the bank until the end of September to finalise the application. The delay would have deprived her of two months' of a discounted first-time buyer rate without *The Times'* help. Other Royal Bank customers are waiting up to four weeks. Some borrowers at the Alliance & Leicester have been waiting a month for the building society to produce mortgage funds. Leeds & Holbeck customers have had to wait three weeks.

These problems follow earlier delays at the Bristol & West, exposed by Weekend Money in August this year. Borrowers faced waits of up to nine weeks. The society claims it has now taken on and trained new staff and has reduced waits to 14 days. It blames its difficulties on "a phenomenal amount of business". Independ-

dent mortgage brokers this week accused building society and bank staff of a "lack of urgency". Phillip Cartwright, of London & Country Mortgages, said: "At times, even when things are straightforward, there is delay. Building societies seem to have this attitude that there is nothing after 5pm. Application forms are too often given to inexperienced junior staff to process," he adds. "If they miss things, borrowers are subjected to further delays."

Ian Darby, of John Charcol, says: "Most lenders have downscaled and were taken by surprise when the market picked up. There are offer periods of four to five weeks from some lenders like the Alliance & Leicester. In the South East, transactions are urgent because there is a shortage of property and things are snapped up quickly." He added that the issue of good service will become more important as the market continues to rise.

Alliance & Leicester admitted it has been having "a few teething problems" with new mortgage administration arrangements. It said: "We have been moving mortgage business away from branches and into mortgage-only units. This move came along at the same time as the upturn in the market, and one or two units, particularly in the South East, have had problems because of a combination of the moving process and the upturn."

"We are installing new computer systems and redirecting business to other units. The worst is over, but we would not want to indicate that this is

not a problem for those affected," Leeds & Holbeck said. It has taken an average of 20 days to complete mortgage applications at its Bristol office this year, but in the last month it has cut this to 18 days, with half completed in 15. The society has been offering competitive deals.

But brokers say 15 to 18 days is still too long and it should be possible to turn round applications in 12 days or less. Mr Cartwright said: "There may be factors outside the lender's control. For example, the return of references by landlords or employers. Borrowers should be prepared to nudge people to reply by return."

Lenders confess they are sometimes slow to turn round applications. But they say part of the reason for delays is that they are more cautious about checking the creditworthiness of prospective borrowers. Mike Stark, head of new business at Royal Bank of Scotland's Greenock mortgage centre, said: "Lenders are beginning to be more particular and our credit checks are more thorough." He is critical of mortgage brokers for giving borrowers an unrealistic assessment of the time their applications will take.

The Royal Bank takes up to four weeks to process applications, but Mr Stark is aiming to cut this to three. He emphasises that the case of Louise Wingrove (see opposite) was a one-off "catalogue of disasters" which indicated "important lessons" for the bank in internal procedures.

Royal Bank pays for blunders



A first-time buyer whose mortgage application took more than two months to be processed is to receive £450 compensation from the Royal Bank of Scotland after the intervention of *The Times* (Sara McConnell writes).

Louise Wingrove suffered a catalogue of appalling delays and breakdowns in communication, including a six-week delay in carrying out a valuation of the flat she and her partner, Keith Robinson, were buying in Lewisham, southeast London. Ms Wingrove's mortgage application,

made at the end of July, was not processed until the end of September.

Getting a mortgage should not have been difficult. Ms Wingrove is a teacher with a secure income and a clean credit record. The loan was being advanced on her income alone. She had no existing mortgage to pay off and she already banked with the Royal Bank.

This was partly why she chose to go for its first-time buyer discount deal, which offered 3.25 per cent off the bank's standard variable rate until August 1997. She said she wanted to move by the end of August. But two weeks into August,

when Ms Wingrove telephoned to find out if the valuation had been done, she was told her application had been "forgotten at the bottom of the pile".

Every time Ms Wingrove contacted the bank, she was passed from one person to another. She was unable to make inquiries through her branch in Manchester, but was forced to contact the Edinburgh head office. Staff failed to keep her informed.

Royal Bank this week apologised to Ms Wingrove. It will pay £335 for two months of lost discount, and £115 in part-repayment of the valuation fee.

Delve deeper into deals

What you see may not always be what you get when it comes to mortgages. The windows of high street banks and building societies are festooned with advertisements promising huge discounts, cashbacks and low fixed rates. But borrowers must look further than the headline rate if they want to get the best deal, according to London & Country, the independent broker.

Lenders are so desperate that they are offering to all borrowers rates which would until recently have been reserved for first-time buyers, says Patrick Bunton of London & Country. But mortgages have become more and more complicated as lenders try to beat their rivals.

Mortgage tables ranking lenders just according to rates only tell half the story, says

London & Country's Phillip Cartwright. He favours a more detailed analysis of some of the best rates on offer:

■ **Principality Building Society:** 4.99 per cent discount until November 1, 1997. The low discounted rate is similar to others, but the base rate is very low at 6.49 per cent. The discount will cut the current rate to 1.5 per cent. The drawback is that buildings or buildings and contents insurance is compulsory.

■ **National Counties Building Society:** 2 per cent discount until March 1, 1999. This gives a rate of 4.99 per cent. Possibly the best deal of all because of a short redemption period. There is a lock-in period of only three years, rather than the five, six or even seven years applied by many lenders. The early redemption penalty during the discount

period is 90 days, rather than the usual 180 days or reclaim of the total discount. After three years, you receive a loyalty discount.

The only problem is that you must have a deposit of at least 10 per cent.

■ **Nationwide:** 1.3 per cent discount for three years. This gives you a rate of 5.19 per cent. Again the society's low base rate of 6.49 per cent gives this the edge. Nationwide is committed to keeping its base rates low as a pledge of its support for mutualism, so even the variable rate would be a good deal. There is no compulsory insurance, your valuation fee will be refunded and you get back £300.

Weekend Money
is edited by
Anne Ashworth

Save the savings twins

Savers beware. Among superior persons it has become fashionable to knock the most successful new savings vehicles of the past decade. In these put-downs, personal equity plans (Peps) and tax exempt special savings accounts (Tessas) are lumped together as though they were interchangeable. They are not.

Tessas were brought in belatedly at the end of the last boom. Their direct aim was to divert potential current spending into savings by giving us a tax incentive to tie up for longer casual bank and building society deposits. At the time, interest rates were high.

Peps offered tax incentives to tempt us to put more of our core savings into individual company shares. They aimed to complement privatisation by spreading mass share ownership to other UK quoted companies. There was also a political purpose: to give millions more people a direct stake in the profitability of British companies.

Predictably, things did not work as intended. By the time Tessas started up, the boom was falling headlong into slump, eventually bringing deposit rates down in its train. Peps only took off when they were hijacked by the collective investment industry. They have accelerated the drift from direct share ownership to trust instead of reversing it. And single market rules require investment in all EU stocks to be treated equally.

As vehicles to encourage and channel savings, however, they have proved so popular that each covers savings of about £30 billion. That popularity is now making them enemies. Peps and

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Tessas both shelter investment income from tax. The more popular they are, the more tax revenue they cost. Like any tax break, this pushes tax rates higher than they need otherwise be. Blinckered tax cutters now see Peps and Tessas as middle-class fat-langs to be plundered in the greater cause or be replaced by feebler schemes targeted at low earners.

Tax advantages were not, however, the only secret of success. Flexibility is just as vital. Money can be put in when it is available and is not tied up for ever. Peps, in particular, score more for simplicity than for tax advantages. This causes much jostling among those who do not trust people with their own money. For them, flexibility makes Peps and Tessas too short term for real savings, allowing the irresponsible to blow the funds instead of using them for socially responsible purposes such as mid-life retraining or long-term care.

That logic would insist on savings vehicles that are so unpopular that

people must be coerced to use them. Naturally, all deny any such intentions in the run-up to an election. Tories insist that private pensions will remain voluntary, along with long-term care plans. Labour insists it will keep tax benefits for Peps and Tessas, though the latter might be brought into a new "individual savings account". If that is to be successful, it will need to be as flexible.

The more you think about pensions, the clearer it becomes that they are not the complete answer to everything. They can commit too much to purposes that are too narrow. They hinder the passing of wealth from parents to children. They cost many billions more in tax allowances, because contributions have to be tax-deductible to tempt people in.

Contributors cannot even be entirely confident that benefits due decades hence will emerge intact. The fundamental issue of how to draw income in retirement from pension savings is in flux. A bizarre alliance between the pensions industry and Treasury will probably sooner or later do away with tax-free lump sums.

Pensions are essential, but most people would be foolish to tie all their long-term savings in the pension strait-jacket, still less into other more specific schemes. In the real world, there is no clear divide between short-term and long-term savings, more a spectrum in which people hope that their savings will become long term. In an age of uncertainty, simple, flexible, and demonstrably attractive schemes should be the backbone of any savings drive.



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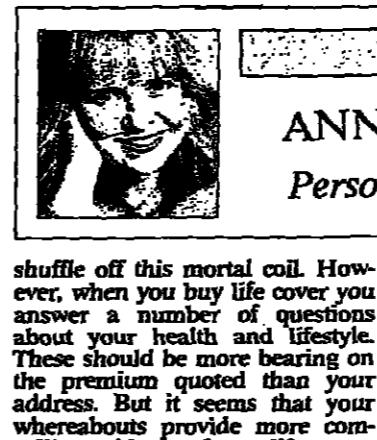
PRUDENTIAL

Insurers display unhealthy habits

Edwina Currie raised a rumble when she suggested that Northerners should swap fast food and fried food for aerobics and fibre. A decade later, her controversial views on the unhealthy habits of those who live north of Watford still hold sway in some sections of the life insurance industry. Surprisingly, some of those guilty of such prejudices are not long established groups but newcomers with a reputation for judging each case on its merits.

As we report below, Virgin Direct, a company that prides itself on being different from the rest, quoted a higher life cover premium for a woman living in the North. Based purely on her address, she was presumed to be less healthy than her twin sister from the South West.

These assessments were based on mortality statistics indicating that southerners are in less haste to



COMMENT

ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

shuffle off this mortal coil. However, when you buy life cover you answer a number of questions about your health and lifestyle. These should be more bearing on the premium quoted than your address. But it seems that your whereabouts provide more compelling evidence of your life expectancy than your low-fat diet.

The conclusion of this new example of the north-south divide is that anyone arranging life insurance must ask the insurer whether

they operate a regional bias. Southerners should then take advantage of the lower rates on offer. Northerners should jog to a competitor.

Worth the wait?

BEFORE the recovery of the housing market, building society bosses would wax lyrical on the subject of long-absent first-time buyers and pine for their return. Curiously, however, the long-

awaited improvement in prices has not been accompanied by a class of borrower. Weekend Money is receiving many reports of delays in the processing of applications from creditworthy candidates (see page 31).

It seems that some lenders see new customers as a disruption to the smooth running of their businesses, and much preferred the sluggish state of affairs when the market was in the doldrums.

THIS week five Morgan Grenfell executives were dismissed after the scandal that has surrounded the group's European unit trusts. Some left with six-figure sums in their pockets.

I hope that the 90,000 investors in these three trusts will also soon have news of their rightful compensation.

Gillian Barton offers a geographer's guide to life insurance

Regions to be cheerful

I had a nasty shock this week. I discovered that I am 10 per cent more likely to meet with an untimely end than is my twin sister, Sue.

It's not that she's a goody two-shoes and I spend my weekends taking bungee jumps and my nights in smoky clubs. Neither have I inherited some awful gene that has managed to bypass her system.

No, my crime, in life insurance terms, is simply that I live in the North. We both have homes in leafy suburbs, but mine is on the outskirts of Hull and my sister's is close to Bournemouth. Because I live in Yorkshire and she lives in Dorset, telephone insurance firms like Virgin Direct and Direct Line want to charge me more for my life insurance.

We're not identical, but we are pretty much the same weight and height. When we asked Virgin Direct and Direct Line for insurance quotes, we answered all the questions about our health, occupation, hobbies and lifestyle in the same way. However, Virgin Direct quoted me a premium of £17.04 for £100,000 of life cover. The quote for my sister was £15.53, around 9.7 per cent less.

At Virgin Direct, the further north you live, the higher the premium. The company says that it bases this stance on the mortality statistics.

"Almost all other companies lump everyone in the same risk pool," said Martin Campbell, product development manager at Virgin Direct. "We have gone much further and believe we end up charging people a much more accurate premium based on their own specific circumstances."

"We do have regional variations, but we are still in a very competitive position. Where you live is just one of a number of factors. Others, like smoking,



Southern comfort: Susan Andrews at Bournemouth



Northern blight: Gillian Barton at her home in Hull

ing, will have a much bigger impact on the premium."

Over at Direct Line they take a similar view. "Yes, we take location into account, along with a number of other factors," a spokesman said. "But the average difference between areas is only about 2.25 per cent."

Increasingly, insurers are taking more into account than whether or not you smoke, and they look at other factors designed to offer more precise premiums, says Direct Line. Well, yes. But I still don't see quite how living in Yorkshire

makes me a worse risk than my twin in Dorset, so I turned to the experts for help.

Nick Dumbreck is an actuary at Watson Wyatt and is on the Association of Consulting Actuaries life insurance committee. He said: "Yes, there have been statistics published by the Government Actuary, based on census information, that show regional variations in mortality."

According to figures from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, female mortality is 111 per cent of the UK average. In the North West, male mortality is 106 per cent of the UK average, while female mortality is 108 per cent of the average. However, Mr Dumbreck added: "You cannot go on from that and say that everyone in Yorkshire is likely to die earlier than everyone in Dorset. It all depends on different factors."

"You have to answer a lot of questions when you apply for insurance over the telephone. These explicitly take into account your health and lifestyle. The big question is to what extent is where you live relevant on top of those factors."

Telephone insurers can be

though you may have to be under 40 and lead a quiet, healthy life down South to qualify for the cheapest premiums. The rest of us need to shop around.

This week GA Life cut its term insurance rates by up to 16 per cent. Its premiums now look particularly good value if you're in the wrong side of 40 and want £100,000 or more of cover. GA Life discriminates between smokers and non-smokers, but not on the grounds of where you live. The company would charge me £16.00 for my insurance.

A nyone looking for life insurance should seek a quote from Equitable Life. The company does not pay commission, so it does not usually get a mention if you're buying from a financial adviser. Equitable Life does not care where you live — it does not even charge more if you smoke. So perhaps not surprisingly it was the most successful life insurer in terms of new regular UK premiums last year. My insurance at Equitable would cost £15.10.

Nigel Webb at Equitable Life says that more than 95 per cent of its term insurance is sold at standard rates. Only a small proportion of applicants have to pay more because of health or other problems.

Virgin Direct says that only 25 to 30 per cent of its quotes are at the standard rate. Everyone else has to pay more. So if you live north of Watford, still have not given up the dreaded weed, enjoy a drink or two and play rugby or go diving, watch out — all those factors can send your premiums soaring.

Paul Cooper, chief underwriter with M&G Re, pointed out that rates for individuals are often set according to the experiences of those on group schemes.

Groups of blue-collar workers are more likely to smoke and have a worse diet than white-collar workers. You might see some marginal differences because of area.

However, under these circumstances there would appear to be an element of double counting. It would seem to a somewhat specious argument.

Swiss Re is also puzzled about why people in the north should be deemed to be a worse risk. A spokeswoman said: "Other factors such as family history, and smoking should be taken into account."

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Safety in numbers



Leading ladies: Tessa has proved as big a star with the public as Nastassia Kinski in the title role in the film *Tess*

The Building Societies Association is renewing its call for the Chancellor's next Budget to equalise the tax breaks enjoyed by tax-exempt special-savings accounts and personal equity plans.

It wants the Government to remove the special tax treatment from all existing investments. Instead, it suggests the introduction of a new personal allowance which can be set against all types of investment income. People would then be free to choose how much to invest in deposits, equities or fixed-interest securities.

However, the societies believe that it is unlikely that the Chancellor will make any real change to the rules governing Tessas.

The Tessas, introduced when interest rates were at their peak in 1991, has caught the imagination of the investing public. The number of accounts has climbed from 2,082,000 in March 1991 to 4,538,000 at the end of December 1995. The amount invested has mushroomed from £5 billion to £28 billion at the end of last year — £19 billion was invested through building societies, with the remaining £9 billion through banks.

However, Inland Revenue statistics show that the amount given away in tax breaks on the accounts is likely to fall from £450 million this year to £350 million next year because of the overall drop in interest rates.

Most financial advisers agree that if you have any sort of savings at all, you should consider opening a Tessa — providing you are not averse to keeping your savings locked up for five years.

The Revenue rules allow you to invest a total of £9,000 in a

Tessa. If you have had a Tessa before, you can reinvest £9,000 in a follow-on Tessa. If you have not had a Tessa, you can invest £3,000 in the first year, followed by up to £1,800 in each of the next four years, or a total of £9,000 by the final year. You can withdraw an amount equivalent to the interest earned without the tax break.

The first decision to make when deciding which Tessa to take out is whether to opt for a fixed-rate account or a variable-rate account. Which to go for depends on your view about the direction of interest rates.

At the beginning of this year, when the huge amount of original Tessa money came to maturity, the best fixed rates were about 7 to 7.5 per cent, as were the best variable rate accounts. Since then, the interest rates for variable-rate Tessas have dropped slightly.

For example, the Nationwide Building Society cut the variable rate on both its products on September 1 after the base

rate cut earlier in the year — rates dropped by 0.35 per cent to 6.15 per cent. The Nationwide Tessa does include a maturity bonus of 2 per cent.

According to Moneyfacts, the best fixed-rate accounts for those saving in a Tessa for the first time include accounts from Natwest Bank, Yorkshire Building Society, Sun Corp, Bank of Ireland and Birmingham Midshires. For example, those saving the full £9,000 in a Northwest Tessa will be guaranteed £12,895 on maturity.

Moneyfacts says that the best variable-rate Tessas, apart from those mentioned in the table, are offered by the Marsden, Principality, Tipton & Coseley, Market Harborough and First Direct.

As well as considering whether to opt for a fixed or variable-rate account, potential Tessa savers should look at the exact structure of the interest rate payments. Many offer tiered rates and bonuses

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SCOTIA INTERNATIONAL INVESTORS

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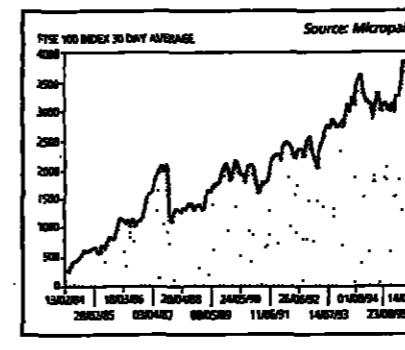
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*The 50% gross return is guaranteed if the FTSE 100 Index remains the same or has increased over the 5 year period. If the FTSE 100 Index should fall your capital will be returned in full. The 50% gross return is equivalent to 40% net after deduction of the applicable rate of income tax, currently 20%. No withdrawals are allowed during the term. Full Terms and Conditions are included in the product literature available on request.

Please send me further information on Britannia's Guaranteed Capital Equity Bond.

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No stamp needed. You wish to use first class post to the address above for a speedier return.

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Sarah Jones warns those tempted to buy gold coins as Christmas presents

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The Equitable Life
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Customers looking for more than a standard service from their bank account will welcome Barclays new current account, Barclays Additions. The latest addition to the world of personal banking, Barclays Additions, is now available to customers nationwide.

Providing services well beyond the scope of a traditional current account, Barclays Additions was created after extensive research into what customers want.

Barclays Additions offers a broad range of value added benefits, suitable for many types of people, particularly couples facing the rising cost of bringing up children.

The extra services provided by Barclays Additions include a £100 overdraft, purchase protection for most items over £50 bought with a Barclays Connect card, a Will Writing Service, life assurance and discounted healthcare cover for children. The account provides a complete financial package of benefits for a monthly fee of just £5. For a typical couple with two children this adds up to a potential saving of £240 in a year.

Customers successfully applying for Barclays Additions benefit from a £100 overdraft, with no usage fees or interest and an automatic authorised overdraft, with no monthly usage fees. The personal overdraft limit agreed by Barclays could be up to £5,000, depending on individual circumstances.

Access to Barclaycall telephone banking provides a host of services 365 days a year - for example customers can check their balance, transfer money between accounts or pay bills at times that suit them. A Barclays Connect card with £100 cheque guarantee facility is also provided. These services are designed to help make money management easy and convenient.

For customers who shop with a debit card, another account benefit is purchase protection for most Barclays Connect purchases between £50 and £15,000. Items bought with Barclays Connect are protected against loss, theft or accidental damage for 100 days from the date of purchase, provided they are not covered by any other insurance. Barclays Cardholder Protection is also included with Barclays

The new Barclays Additions account gives you more control, convenience and security

Additions, so a single free phone call is all that is needed to cancel lost or stolen cards. All debit and credit cards belonging to the account holder and their partner are covered, even if they don't have a joint account.

Barclays Additions also features a Will Writing Service which could benefit many customers. A recent NOP survey of 1,000

adults revealed that 75% of people who have children said they do not have a Will. Customers automatically receive £5,000 of life assurance cover and no declarations or medical examinations are required (death from natural causes within the first six months of opening the account is not covered). The cover is valid for account

ENJOY ALL THESE BENEFITS

- £100 overdraft - with no interest or usage charges
- Automatic authorised overdrafts without a usage fee. Interest will be charged only on the amount over £100 overdrawn*
- Purchase protection for most Barclays Connect debit card purchases over £50
- Will Writing Service
- Automatic £5,000 life assurance cover, £5,000 each for joint account holders
- Barclays Cardholder Protection
- Healthcare cover for children under 21, exclusive to Barclays Additions at a specially discounted rate of £2.50, per child, per month
- 24 hour legal helpline
- Barclays Connect card with £100 cheque guarantee facility
- Barclaycall telephone banking
- Customers who accidentally exceed their agreed overdraft limit for up to two working days a month will not be charged an unauthorised overdraft fee, only interest is payable*



PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY

Customers taking full advantage of the benefits offered by a Barclays Additions account can make a realistic saving of £240 in a year.

CASE STUDY

Barclays Additions is chosen by a couple in their early 30s with two young children. They have an agreed overdraft on their joint account because they regularly overdraw at the end of the month before their salaries are paid in. If they took advantage of the added value features from Barclays Additions, their potential saving in a year could be:

- | | |
|--|--------|
| Authorised overdraft usage fees with a Barclays Bank Account | £60 |
| Interest on overdrafts up to £100 | £3 1 |
| Healthcare cover for two children | £108 2 |
| Mirror Will which reflects the wishes of both husband and wife | £94 |

Estimated saving on life assurance for both Joint Cardholder Protection £22 3
Joint Potential Saving £13
£5 monthly fee for Barclays Additions - £300
Potential saving in a year £560

Using the helpline could save around £100 per hour in legal fees and there is also the added security of purchase protection on most Barclays Connect purchases over £50 which could save the cost of replacing items which are lost, stolen or accidentally damaged within 100 days.

- 1 Customer with a Barclays Bank Account overdrews up to £100 for 5 days a month.
- 2 No standalone PMI policy is available for children but the mirror forecast value is £7 per child per month, therefore the potential saving is £4.50 per child.
- 3 Usually subject to a minimum premium and age/health declarations. The estimated saving of £11 each per annum is based on an assumed market value for £5,000 of cover.

EASY SWITCHING TO BARCLAYS

To make opening an account at Barclays even easier, a new account transfer service has been introduced. Barclays handles the paper work, transferring across all direct debits and standing orders to the customer's new account. Customers will be kept informed at all stages about how things are progressing. All that is required from the customer is their signature and time to check the paper work.

Barclays is the first high street bank to introduce a transfer service which doesn't require the customer to fill in forms. This is in direct response to customer research.

CALLS OF CONVENIENCE

Barclaycall telephone banking, one of the features of Barclays Additions, could revolutionise the way many customers manage their money. Telephone banking is rapidly becoming one of the high street bank's most popular services.

With Barclaycall, customers can ring from early in the morning until late at night to access a range of banking services - including checking their balance, paying bills, changing standing orders and direct debits and transferring money from one account to another. For customers with a busy lifestyle Barclaycall could be the solution to many problems.

Barclaycall boasts a 98% satisfaction rate amongst its users and calls in the UK are charged at the local rate. Customers can continue to use the Barclays network of around 2,000 branches as well as Barclaycall.

PAYING IS PAINLESS WITH BARCLAYS CONNECT

The Barclays Connect card, issued with Barclays Additions, is a multi-function card providing the easiest possible way to pay. Barclays Connect is a debit card enabling customers to pay for goods and services wherever they see the VISA or DELTA signs. To pay, the customer hands over their card and the money is taken directly from their current account, no cheques to write, no monthly bill, just easy paying. But, for customers who still want to write a cheque, Barclays Connect carries a £100 cheque guarantee facility.

Customers can also use Barclays Connect to obtain money from cash machines in the UK and abroad by simply keying in their PIN number. By inserting their Barclays Connect card into any cash machine displaying the VISA sign the customer can withdraw up to £300 a day in local currency, or they can use it to pay in shops and restaurants. Barclays Connect can be used in over 250,000 cash machines worldwide and is accepted as payment in over 12 million outlets. Any transactions made whilst abroad or in the UK will appear on the customer's next current account statement.

*Barclays Additions and overdraft applications are subject to status. Customers must be 18 or over (20 in Jersey). Charges and interest rates may vary at the Bank's discretion. The monthly interest rate is 1.45% (18.3% EAR) for authorised overdrafts, 2.20% (29.8% EAR) for unauthorised overdrafts and 2.50% for any agreed limit. Unauthorised overdraft usage fees and all interest are calculated on a compound monthly basis. A month refers to a monthly charging period and not calendar months. Any payment causing an excess over your agreed limit is payable at the Bank's discretion. Interest is calculated on the cleared balance on your statement of any unused overdraft usage fees and any interest to be debited to your account. Overdrafts are repayable immediately upon written notice. Barclays Bank PLC, Personal Sector, PO Box 120, Croydon, CR4 8TQ. Barclays is a responsible lender and takes into consideration your application for borrowing, your financial circumstances will be appraised. And remember if you run into difficulties, please contact us immediately. EAR = Equivalent Annual Rate.

Golden daze from gold fever

If you are tempted to buy a few gold coins, do not let the romance and nostalgia of it all blind you to the real risk you are taking. Gold coins are made of gold - an extremely volatile market. While many may buy a sovereign or two to put away for their grandchildren, any investment strategy should be more short-term since the price of coins is largely influenced by the price of gold, which has fallen 44 per cent over the past 16 years.

Within that month you would have seen a good profit. But over the long term the pattern is not so encouraging. In the boom of 1980 gold was £377 an ounce, today it is at an all time low for this year of £241, so obviously you would make a substantial loss if you sold now. However, it may be a good time to buy, though you cannot tell how the price can go.

Coin prices change from day to day. To check you are getting a fair price, ask two or three dealers for their price that day. Dealers' commission, whether buying or selling, is built into the price. Certain coins sell at small premium over their gold content, such as Krugerrands and modern sovereigns, and are referred to as "bullion coins". So, for example, the gold in a sovereign is currently just under £57 but it will

cost £61 to buy, giving the dealer a £4 profit. The selling price for a sovereign, currently at £55, is based purely on the price of gold. Prices will vary according to the number of coins you are buying or selling.

Sovereigns and the South African Krugerrands are the most commonly traded coins. Other coins, such as the Britannia, the Canadian Maple Leaf and the Chinese Panda, which are harder to come by, will have a higher premium.

New rules on VAT from early last year mean that you should be able to buy a second-hand gold coin without paying VAT with the dealer paying VAT on the dealer's overall sales margin. You normally have to pay 17.5 per cent VAT on the whole cost of a new coin. The dealer margin scheme for

second-hand coins is optional so always check that the price you are quoted includes any VAT and that you are not paying VAT on the whole price. The price of a sovereign could vary between £61 including VAT on the dealer's margin and £71.68 with full VAT.

It is advisable to use a dealer registered with the British Numismatic Traders Association, and to avoid schemes which purport to invest in a portfolio of rare coins on your behalf. The chairman of one such company, Rare Coin Investment, was recently jailed for six years for defrauding clients. Coins as an investment are not covered by the Financial Services Act, so investors cannot claim under the Investors Compensation Scheme.

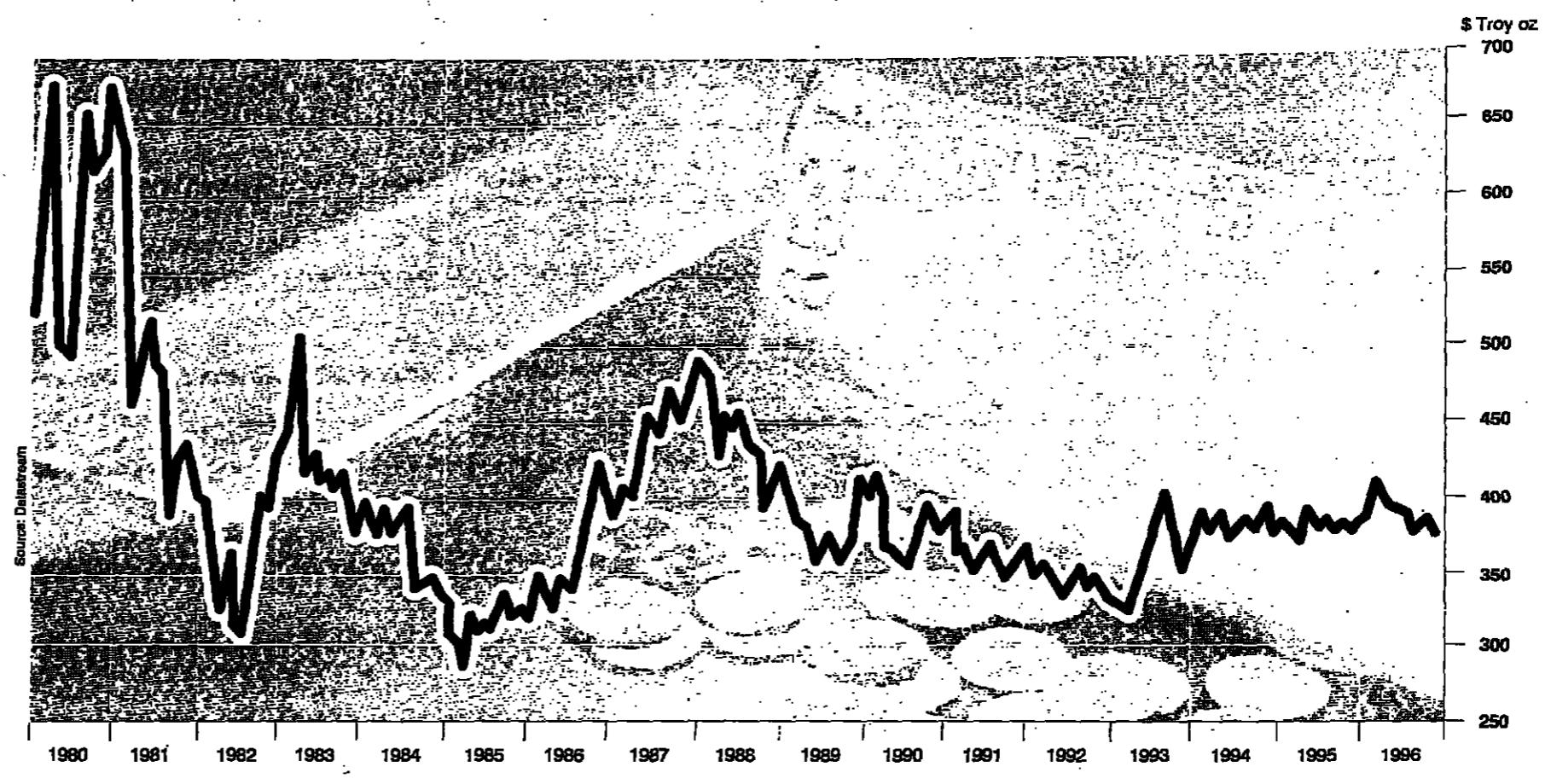
For a list of coin dealers, many of whom trade by mail order, send an

SAE to the British Numismatic Traders Association, PO Box 474a, Thames Ditton, Surrey KT7 0WJ. The trade press carries details of forthcoming coin fairs.

Gains you make on the sale of coins are liable to capital gains tax. If the coins are a gift to a child, any gains will come under his or her own CGT allowance, as long as the coins are actually handed over to the child.

"Most people buy coins as presents," said Stephen Fenton, of Knightsbridge Coins and chairman of the BNTA. "I couldn't recommend coins as a great investment since it all depends entirely on the price of gold. When I started 30 years ago a sovereign cost £4. In 1980 it was up to £100 and since then has fluctuated around £45-£60. But who can tell what will happen to gold over the next few years?"

HOW THE PRICE OF GOLD BULLION HAS FALLEN OVER THE PAST 16 YEARS



ADVERTISEMENT

AN ACCOUNT FAMILIES CAN BANK ON



holders under 60 and for a joint account both partners have £5,000 of cover each.

A legal helpline provides customers with telephone access to solicitors and legal executives 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Typical calls answered by the service are about property disputes, insurance advice and employment issues.

Heavily discounted healthcare cover for children is also exclusively available with Barclays Additions. Families who open a Barclays Additions account can capitalise on this extra benefit at just £2.50, per child, per month. This cover provides access to Key Plan for Youth from PPP healthcare and is available exclusively for children of Barclays Additions account holders.

Barclays Additions is available alongside the Barclays Bank Account and offers ten additional benefits. It is likely to appeal to a broad range of customers and is of particular value to families as the benefits provide extra financial control, security and peace of mind.

Research by Barclays Bank revealed that more than one in three customers, regardless of their current bank, would like an account which offers more than the traditional service. Whilst Barclays remains committed to continuing to offer free day-to-day banking, Gordon Rankin, Director of Personal Banking, said "Barclays Additions is a current account with value-added services which are attractive to many customers. Take up levels in the pilot regions have been more than twice what we anticipated proving there is real demand for a current account of this kind. We expect to attract many new customers from other banks."

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TTA

THE TIMES SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

SPORT 45

BOXING: FAMILIAR CABARET ROLLS INTO CAIRO WHILE UNHERALDED BRITON BIDS FOR WORLD TITLE IN AMERICAN'S BACK YARD

FROM ANDREW LONGMORE
IN CAIRO

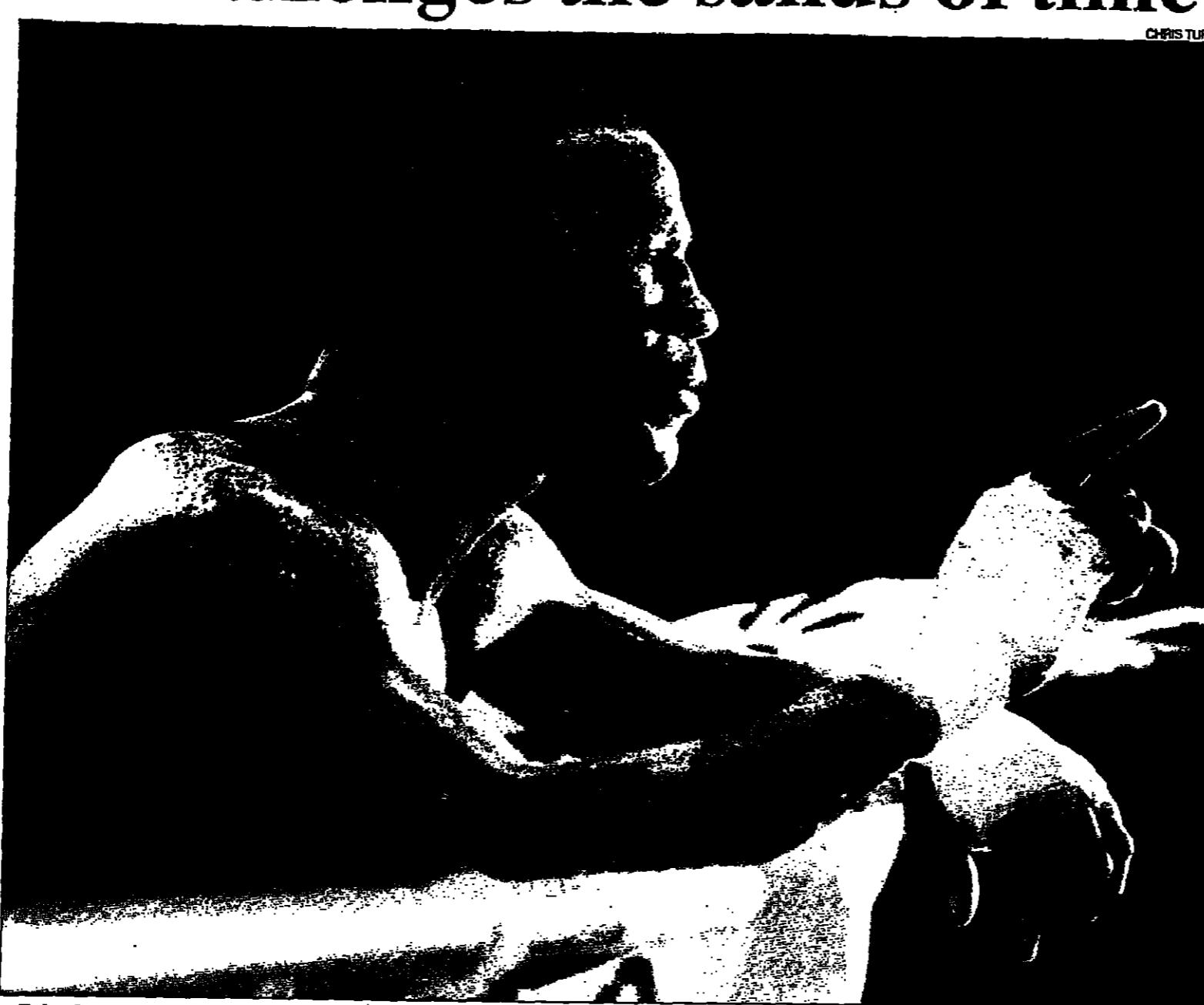
WHATEVER his fate on his return to the ring against Luis Barrera in the Cairo indoor stadium tonight, Chris Eubank has lost none of his gift for understatement during his recent sabbatical. The poster advertising his first contest for a year features the Sphinx, the Pyramids and, rising between them like a reincarnation of Ramses II, the proud head of Brighton's finest. The slogan reads: "The Lord of the Manor presents Style on the Nile." Eubank and the Sphinx. Appropriate enough, many would say. Two statues for the price of one.

The weigh-in yesterday showed that Eubank's physique has not suffered from his time away, or from his natural graduation from super-middleweight to light-heavyweight. For all the Argentinian journeyman status, this is a serious bout for Eubank and his regime has been surprisingly spartan. He has run along the banks of the Nile each morning at first light, accompanied by a posse of armed guards and a gaggle of small boys and has sparred more than 100 rounds in preparation for the bout against a fighter well past his prime. The gold-tipped cane is still part of the show, but the inclusion of his hairdresser in the entourage is the one sop to vanity.

If the personalised postcard entitled "Transcendentalism ultimately means non-conforming", given away free with every "Style on the Nile" T-shirt, is any indication, Eubank's mind seems to have gone up a weight, too. In between cruising round Brighton in his customised pick-up and losing on points to Mrs Merton in his last televised appearance, Eubank has clearly been doing some thinking, not all of it straight.

The riddle of the sands still remains. Why is the self-styled smart fighter, the man who not only beat 43 of his 47 opponents but the whole stinking system, infringing an age as old as the Pharaohs? Smart fighters never come back, not even at the relatively tender age of 30.

Depending on who you listen to, the answer lies in the empty lining of Eubank's wallet or the bulging recesses of his imagination. Eubank earned enough from boxing to keep his wife, Karen, and three (soon to be four) children in comfort, but not perhaps to keep himself in the designer-



Eubank, returning to the ring that he claimed to hate, prepares for his comeback, complete with suitable ceremony, against Barrera in Cairo

label manner to which he had become accustomed. Stories of his extravagance, of shopping sprees and flights on Concorde have fuelled speculation about the need to top up funds.

"I've made a lot of money out of boxing," he said. "If I lose money, I am not too worried. The object is much bigger than that. I want to bring boxing to the Middle East." And where better to start than by promoting the first professional show in the biggest city in Africa?

Eubank's grand plan is to set up a foundation to teach Cairo's street children how to box. Eubank intends to be one of the teachers. "It would be very much an honour. Here I have been honoured in a way I

never have been at home," he said. Ah, rejection. Eubank feels neither his achievements, which range from a record 19 successive defences of his World Boxing Organisation title to the construction of a 69-flap project for the homeless, nor his lofty ambitions have been suitably acknowledged in England, where he says, the press like their boxers to be seen and, barring a few monosyllables, not heard. Cairo might still be learning about Eubank, but at least it will judge him for what he is.

In a city where everything has a price, the extent of the people's admiration of their strange new guest will be gauged by the size of the crowd. The capacity of the indoor stadium is about 20,000 and, according to the organisers, 18,000 tickets have already been sold. — "distributed" is Eubank's phrase. The cheapest advertised seats cost £15. 15 times more than entry to the main football stadium up the road. The most expensive £750. Eubank has promised a grand entrance, on a camel or a

panther, rumour has it, but, wisely, the undercard includes three finals of the Egyptian amateur national championships, which might be more enticing to the locals than Eubank himself. One of the sponsors of the bout, Al-Ahram, the state-run newspaper, has been the main organ of publicity, along with national television, but the lack of support from international broadcasters reflects Eubank's diminishing drawing power and makes this venture as risky as a ride in a

Cairo taxi. The story that a Saudi princess started Eubank's interest in the Middle East adds to the mystery.

Ronnie Davies, Eubank's faithful trainer, believes that his man has discovered a plainer truth. "He is still a fighter and he wants that title back," he said. Eubank needs boxing more than boxing needs Eubank, in fact. "He missed it. You can't just be a champion and then give it all up, not when you've got so much more to offer. He needs a break, now he looks sharp, classy, with plenty of power." Too much, very probably, for his ageing opponent. By late tonight Barrera might very well be the one sculpted in stone.

I want to bring boxing to the Middle East. And where better to start than the biggest city in Africa?

— Steve Clegg

Editor, *Boxing News*
London

Editor, *Boxing News</*

RACING: HILLS POSTS FIRST GROUP SUCCESS OF SEASON WITH DEWHURST VICTORY

In Command fails to make classic appeal

By ROBERT WRIGHT

TWICE in the last four years, the winner of the Dewhurst Stakes has gone on to success in the 2,000 Guineas. However, gungy though In Command was in yesterday's renewal, it is hard to envisage him following in the hoof prints of Pennenkamp and Zafonic.

Michael Hills, the winning jockey, is nonetheless looking forward to next season. "He'll stay a mile — no problem," he said. The bookmakers were less excited, with Coral offering a dismissive 25-1 for the Guineas.

However, that mattered little to the winning trainer, Barry Hills, who expressed great relief at saddling his first group winner of the season. "Only Henry Cecil and I have trained a group winner every year since the Pattern began in 1971, and I was running out of time," he said.

In Command was beaten just over a length when third

to Bahamian Bounty, who is also owned by Maktoum Al-Maktoum, in the Middle Park Stakes at Newmarket earlier this month. As a result, he was sporting the second colours yesterday, and was returned a 10-1 chance, while Bahamian Bounty shared favouritism at 7-2 with Kahal.

The winning trainer explained: "He's done well physically since the Middle Park, and the drop of rain we had has made all the difference to him."

Musical Pursuit cut out the early running with Kahal but, having been little outpaced two furlongs from home, he stayed on determinedly to be just a head adrift at the line.

Representing the trainer-owner combination of Mark Tompkins and Benny Schmidt-Bodner, who run

Even Top in today's Eclipse Stakes, Musical Pursuit will now be put away and trained for the 2,000 Guineas.

Tompkins said: "I'm delighted. Pat [Eddery] said he was very babyish when he picked him up, but when he got the message he was gaining all the way to the line. He coughed after winning at Newmarket in August, and if I could have got one more run into him, it would have made him more battle hardened."

With Air Express, a 50-1 shot, just a neck away in third, and the whole field covered by four lengths, the form appears dubious. Indeed, bookmaker reaction to the Guineas centred on Bahamian and Revocue. Both have beaten In Command this summer, and have been trimmed to 4-1 and 11-2 respectively by William Hill.

While In Command will stay with Hills, Bahamian Bounty and Moonlight Paradise, who had earlier beaten Dazzle in the Rockefel Stakes, will both winter in Dubai.



In Command, right, fends off Musical Pursuit in the Dewhurst Stakes yesterday

WOLVERHAMPTON

THUNDERER
7.00 Songsheet. 7.30 Commander Jones. 8.00 Imposing Time. 8.30 Nigel's Lad. 9.00 Princess Of Hearts. 9.30 People Direct.

GOING: STANDARD **DRAW: NO ADVANTAGE**

7.00 ATHENA HANDICAP (3-0; £2,415; 50) (13 runners)

1 2500 SONGSHEET (7) (D) M McNeice 5-7. D Steeves (7) 6
2 4151 COMMANDER JONES (7) (D) B Medium 9-5. M Tabbett 6
3 5205 PRINCESS OF HEARTS (7) (D) K McNeice 5-7. G Parker 7
4 5205 SIEVERS FLYER (7) (D) T Thompson 9-5. L Williams 7
5 0106 IMPERIAL GARDEN (7) (D) J Heaton 8-13. J Fortune 8
6 0106 QUEENIE (7) (D) (C) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-1. P McNeice 5-3
7 0002 RUMBLE (7) (D) (C) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-1. P McNeice 5-3
8 0002 PLAYMAKER (2) (D) (C) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. L Williams 7
9 0281 RUMBLE (2) (D) (C) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. P McNeice 5-3
10 0281 IL DORIA (7) (D) 8-12. D Marshall 7
11 0423 TEEMER (7) (D) B Pelling 4-11. Martin Devine 5-2
12 2200 NEED YOU BADLY (7) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. L Williams 7
13 1202 GI LA HIGH (20) (D) J Berry 8-10. G Carter 7
14 0204 NIGHT HARMONY (10) (D) Mrs J McNeice 8-9. D Hamilton 7
15 0204 NIGHT HARMONY (4) (D) Mrs J McNeice 8-9. D Hamilton 7
16 0204 NIGHT HARMONY (4) (D) Mrs J McNeice 8-9. C Hartigan 10-1 others.

7.30 HERA CLAIMING STAKES (2-0; £2,415; 60) (13)

1 2233 BURNES MANOR (7) (D) T Berry 8-5. D Harrison 4
2 4151 COMMANDER JONES (7) (D) B Medium 9-5. M Tabbett 6
3 5205 SIEVERS FLYER (7) (D) T Thompson 9-5. L Williams 7
4 5205 IMPERIAL GARDEN (7) (D) J Heaton 8-13. J Fortune 8
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6 0106 RUMBLE (7) (D) (C) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. P McNeice 5-3
7 0002 JUST LOU (7) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. P McNeice 5-3
8 0002 SANTERIA (18) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. P McNeice 5-3
9 0002 SANTELLA (7) (D) Mrs J McNeice 5-13. P McNeice 5-3
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RUGBY UNION

Cardiff aiming to shift balance of power in Europe

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

ONLY eight days into European competition and already two countries are struggling to retain an involvement in the Heineken Cup. The two Italian representatives, Milan and Treviso, have been beaten twice while, of the three Scottish entrants, the Borders must win at Leicester today to nourish hopes of a quarter-final place.

To a degree, however, that was predictable. It remains a weakness of the European concept that, in the end, it may be dominated by France and England, unless Cardiff can disrupt the script. They have, at least, given themselves a chance of doing so today. Despite rumours that key players would be spared the stern examination in Les Sept Derniers — home of the holders, Toulouse — Cardiff will go into the match with 14 internationals.

Argentina turn to the professionals

FROM FRANKIE DEGES IN BUENOS AIRES

IN WHAT could be a turning-point for the strictly amateur Argentinian rugby union (UAR), three players who have been involved in professional rugby have been nominated in a squad of 36 from which will be drawn the party to tour England next month.

The three forwards include Federico Méndez, who gained notoriety during his first tour in 1990 by knocking out Paul Ackford during the international with England at Twickenham. Méndez, then a schoolboy prop making only his second appearance for Argentina, is now a hooker and has been playing for Natal; he remains undecided about his future and is considering offers to play overseas, some of them from English clubs.

Mauricio Reggiardo, also a front-row forward, plays for Castres in France and German Llanes, the experienced

lock, has played for Milan. The executive council has not yet officially allowed them back into the fold. Luis Granda, the UAR president and chairman of selectors, said yesterday, "But Méndez has been cleared to play for his province and the councillors want to see all three play. They will be getting only the standard tour allowance, which will be around £40 a day."

ARGENTINA TOUR PARTY: Banks, F Sola (Tali), D Glaister (Banks), J S Mezon (SC), J Legor (Le Tablier), F Garcia (Alumni), G Camarada (Alumni), J Gonzalez (Camerata), J Leon (Camerata), L Arias (Belgrano Alaves), Capitan, D Cuesta Silve (SC), E Jerezado (Jockey), D Alvarez (SC), T Solari (M), D Balcarce (Rosario), J M Calley (SC), G Querada (Pirata), N Fernandez (Miranda), H Madrid, C Berres (Coronel Atletico), L Lobrano (Rosario), A Pachano (Rosario), J M Ponzio (Durens), O Gómez, J L Llorente (Toros), M Soto (Barco Hippocrene), F Méndez (Natal), M Reggiardo (Castres), M Llanes (Castres), R Correa (Curupay), G Llanes (La Patra), J Simón (Tala), R Pérez (Durens), P Trameglio (AS), R Martí (SC), F Fernández (Lobos), C Gómez (Argentinos de Bella Vista), P Bouza (Durens).

Harlequins acquire art of graft to sustain sequence

By DAVID HANDS

THE longer it goes on, the harder it is to sustain, but Harlequins are beginning to take pride in their unbeaten record. Six out of six in the Courage Clubs Championship, two out of two in the Anglo-Welsh Cup and a heart-stopping victory over Ulster on Wednesday to begin their Heineken Cup campaign. Can it last?

Hitherto the answer would have been no, but while the moneyed era has undoubtedly made a difference to their fortunes, there is also now something of the traditional English bulldog about them, not a characteristic for which they are noted.

When they have needed to graft — as they did at Ravenhill — they have done so and that is the quality that has brought so much pleasure to Dick Best, their director of rugby.

"We could quite easily have gone down the tubes against Ulster," Best said. "We were hosed out of the lineout, up against a very physical, competitive side who put us under a lot of pressure. By the end of the game, we were getting very little ball, but we were very pleased with our defensive qualities. Not many tries have been scored against us and the players are beginning to take pride from that."

"Previous Harlequins sides might have lost a game like



Best: cautious

that. We wouldn't have possessed the firepower to withstand such an onslaught. Ulster kept coming at us, they didn't fade in the last quarter, so to win has done us a power of good."

Wednesday's was the first competitive game in which Harlequins kept their line intact but, in so many of their high-scoring frolics in England, the difficulty has been for players to maintain concentration when they know the opposition will not win. In their two Anglo-Welsh matches, against Swansea and Cardiff, they have conceded seven tries with what is, effectively, their second string, while 14 tries have been scored against them in their six domestic league matches.

Best is keeping a cautious eye on the future, though. "We

were getting a performance full of pace and passion." Gareth Llewellyn, Wales' most-capped forward, said. "I've seen some of the Neath boys at squad training, I've spoken a few times with their coaches and they will be trying to put one over us."

Results, page 48

BALLROOM DANCING: BURNS AND FAIRWEATHER END CAREER IN FINE STYLE

Latin experts leave the rest standing

By RUTH GLEDHILL

THE best-known Latin dancers in Britain, Donnie Burns and Gaynor Fairweather, bade an emotional farewell to competitive dancing in the early hours of yesterday morning, after defeating 105 couples from around the world to win their tenth Elsa Wells International Championship title at the Albert Hall. Burns and Fairweather, 13 times world champions and each appointed MBE, received three standing ovations for their charismatic performance over the five Latin dances of cha-cha-cha, samba, rumba, *paso doble* and jive.

Burns and his partner set the seal on a record unlikely to be equalled in the foreseeable future but, now that their reign has ended, the Latin field is open once more. All five runners-up from yesterday will begin training in the hope of winning the world championship next year, with Bryan Watson and Karen Hardy, of England, the favourites.

In the amateur modern championship, the failure of Italy's leading couple to appear meant that the main contest took place between Christopher Hawkins and Hazel Newberry, the British champions, and the British No 2 pair, Alan and Donna Shingler. The Shinglers had been

beaten narrowly by the effervescent Hawkins and Newberry at the Midland championships two weeks ago and that outcome was repeated yesterday.

In the professional modern, Marcus and Karen Hilton, of Rochdale, took their sixth championship. Placed sixth were Timothy Howson and Joanne Bolton, new entries to the professional rankings, who won the amateur title last year. Not all couples make a successful transition to professional status but the success of Howson and Bolton in reaching their first International final was considered a breakthrough and they are being tipped as future champions.



Ridge, of New Zealand, is stopped in his tracks by Broadbent and O'Connor, of Great Britain, yesterday

Britain suffer for Morley's sin

New Zealand 17
Great Britain 12

FROM CHRISTOPHER IRVINE
IN AUCKLAND

IT IS no consolation to Great Britain that they contributed immensely to a classic encounter of bruising intensity and high drama here yesterday. They had a winning start to the three-match series in New Zealand seemingly sewn up, only for it to unravel in nine minutes best forgotten after 71 largely memorable ones.

Thus young Matt Perry joins Adelayo Adebayo at centre, with Jon Sleatholme eager to show his mettle on the wing. If Steve Ojomoh has not recovered from influenza, Eric Peters will play in the back row.

Pontypool, having enjoyed wins over Treviso and Edinburgh, know that the worst is still to come in the shape of Bath and Dax. They will regret the absence of David Manley on the wing, but if Neil Jenkins is in, good kicking form then Bath's propensity to concede penalties could cost them dear.

Gaps in the Britain defence suddenly appeared at the place where Morley should

have been and John Timu took advantage by scoring two conclusive tries in five minutes. Afterwards, colleagues rallied round Morley.

Denis Betts, who succeeded in slowing New Zealand in their tracks by testing the laws on interference to the limit, said: "Nobody is blaming him. It could have happened to any one of us in that situation at that time. The game plan was to slow them, but the referee wasn't having it this time. With 12 men, the rest was inevitable."

The defeat leaves Britain having to win next Friday at Palmerston North to keep the series alive; they should not get despondent. They exposed New Zealand as beatable and lost on what might be called a technical knockout.

Not that Phil Larder, the Britain coach, could hide his disappointment. "You can't win Test matches with 12 men in the last ten minutes," he said. "We won a match and threw it away. With 13 men, we'd have stopped them scoring the try, let alone two."

All the hard work had been achieved, outstandingly in certain cases. O'Connor should

Broadbent silenced those who doubted their ability as props at the highest level. Goulding kicked to perfection. Cunningham controlled affairs at dummy half and Powell and Radlinski were like rocks in the centre. Spruce was missed when he went off dazed, but always there was someone to fill the gap.

The stronghold was such that the Kiwis rarely escaped Great Britain's clutches. They were vulnerable to Goulding's party piece, the cross-field kick over the heads of a compressed line. Like a quarterback's precision throw, it found the hands of Hunt, who outjumped Barnett for the opening try.

Betts, to boos on his home ground at the Ericsson Stadium here, scored the second, the product of good backing up and slick hands, including an exquisite pass out of the back door by Joynt that allowed Goulding and Radlinski to send Betts twisting out of Pongia's tackle.

After an exchange of penalties in the third quarter by Goulding and Ridge, Britain looked up to the task of holding their lead. The crowd

grew anxious. Radlinski nailed Ridge at the corner, Timu was dragged back by Betts and so the tension built. New Zealand failed to get attacking leverage at the rucks, where Britain made life difficult, until Morley's fatal challenge on Hoppe.

Within 60 seconds Timu had cut inside Goulding for his first try. Ridge's conversion made it 12-10. The ball was brilliantly kept alive for Timu's second and winning try. Ridge converted from the touchline and added a dropped goal. Britain could not believe it. Neither could a relieved New Zealand.

Boris Webber's *Courtaulds* was the backmarker, slightly more than 600 miles behind Group 4. On *Time & Tide*, seven miles ahead of *Courtaulds*, the mood was positive, despite the fact that three crew are to leave the boat in Rio. One is chronically seasick, another has failed to raise his full fee and a third will rejoin the boat after the Southern Ocean.

James Hatfield, skipper of the first disabled crew to race round the world, yesterday answered speculation that *Time & Tide* might withdraw after Rio. "It's been an excellent trip so far," he said. "Why would we want to consider cutting it short?"

Ben Ainslie, the Olympic silver-medal winner, takes on 60 of the world's leading Laser sailors in the *Tourist*. Regatta of Kuwait, starting today.

Challenge positions, page 48

SQUASH

England take on champions

FROM COLIN MCQUILLAN
IN PETALING JAYA, MALAYSIA

ENGLAND yesterday reached the final of the Perrier women's world squash championship here with a comprehensive 30-win over South Africa.

They will meet Australia, the top seeds, in the final, the Australians having secured a similarly straightforward win over New Zealand yesterday.

With both deposited world open champions, Michelle Martin and her powerful replacement, Sarah FitzGerald, in the squad, as well as two world top-six players in Liz Irving and Carol Owens, a passionate defence of the title for a second time is probable from the Australians.

Deprived of their middle order through injuries to Sue Wright and Jane Martin before the championship started, England now seem to have lost the services of Suzanne Horner, their world No 3 and national champion, who is suffering from back problems.

Yesterday Cassandra Jackson led the reserves, Linda Charman and Fiona Geaves, to victory over a South African side with obvious ambitions for the third place play-off today.

NEWS OF THE WORLD

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SAILING

Group 4's lead looks secure on run to Rio

By EDWARD GORMAN
SAILING CORRESPONDENT

THE BT Global Challenge fleet is crossing the Equator, with the customary appearances before the Court of King Neptune for those doing so for the first time.

Mike Golding, the skipper of Group 4, has dominated the opening leg and retains the lead as he continues to ply the most westerly course in his attempt to be first to Rio de Janeiro, an objective he should achieve towards the end of next week.

Yesterday, after logging the second highest 24-hour run of 212 miles, he was approaching the easternmost point of Brazil at around nine knots and with 1,370 miles left to Rio.

Sixty-six miles behind but farther out to sea was Toshiba Wave Warrior, skippered by Simon Walker, with *Concert* under Chris Tibbs, 45 miles back and even farther to the east. Tibbs and Walker fared almost as well as Golding yesterday and will be hoping for stronger winds next week.

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The main pack is tightly bunched and led by the much-improved *Savie The Children*, under Andy Hindley, followed by *Commercial Union 3Com*, *Motorola*, *Health Insured II* and *Ocean Rover*.

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Challenge positions, page 48

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Time for football to crack down on the bad boys

When Saturday comes, the managers earn their corn by making judgements on the fitness of football players. Usually, it is a question of hamstrings, of dodgy knees, swollen ankles. Today is different: at Aston Villa, Arsenal and Rangers, the managers must try to look into the heads of three errant players and make their team selections accordingly.

The probability is that Mark Bosnich will play in goal for Aston Villa against Leeds United, that Paul Merson will keep his place, even with the return of Dennis Bergkamp for Arsenal against Coventry City, and that Paul Gascoigne will take the field against Aberdeen.

Expediency, in the pursuit of three points, almost always comes before concern about public perceptions of morality.

The focus has been on our national sport, on the world's game, in the past week.

Bosnich gave that thoughtless "Basil Fawlty" Nazi salute to a Tottenham Hotspur crowd known to have a large Jewish contingent. Silly boy.

Merson came to the end of the marriage that helped to sustain him through his rehabilitation from drugs, drink and gambling. Sad boy.

Gascoigne, sent off in Amsterdam for manic behaviour on the field, and exposed for allegedly worse behaviour in the bedroom, cost his team any hope of progressing in the European Cup. Wretched man-child.

A broad, Diego Maradonna was pictured in tears because his agent was jailed for reported mafia crimes and drug trafficking. And Paul Ince was sent off in Italy for pushing an opponent who admitted he had racially abused the Englishman.

Of them all, only Ince is automatically suspended from the next game, although he has put in an appeal which, if won, would allow him to compete against Juventus in Turin tomorrow.

When are we going to stop excusing footballers, on account of their wealth being so burdensome, their lives so pressured, their temptations



ROB HUGHES

inhuman? Should they be absolved from the normal duties, the normal obligations in society?

At the end of a week in which Manchester United and Liverpool recouped some respect for British football abroad, these are sad questions, yet they dominate.

Gascoigne in turmoil is no stranger to us. He was even sent off and investigated by police, in this corresponding match against Aberdeen last November when he bunted John Ingles in the stomach. I will not pretend that I have inside knowledge of what happened between Paul and Sheryl Gascoigne in their hotel room last weekend. The *Daily Mirror* pictures of her injuries are graphic and disturbing, but also unworthy, as is some of the reporting, seeking to mock Glenn Hoddle and his moral crusade.

The fact is that Hoddle's predecessor, Terry Venables, condoned habits that Hoddle despises. Venables also built into his England team a dependency on Gascoigne that, the coach now admits, was "a gut feeling". Hoddle, as he assesses this week's misbehaviour, specifically the manner in which Gascoigne kicked out at a fallen opponent, must decide whether he can trust or afford Gascoigne in such a place as Tbilisi early next month. Gascoigne's warning genius has given us all much to appreciate, but waning in-

deed was the pace and penetration of the player against Poland this month, and moreover Hoddle has unearthed David Beckham as a young and reliable playmaker for his national team.

The bad behaviour of footballers has dogged England through good and bad times. It does not seem as if this unfortunate image deters the large firms that contribute more and more of their advertising and sponsorship budgets to the game. In which case, should anyone be surprised that those who pick 11 individuals for a task, show similar disinterest in the audience at home, even if so many of them are impressionable youngsters?

Neither England, nor the clubs, can be expected to perform as rehabilitation centres for miscreants. "A football coach is not a priest," João Saldanha, who built the wonderful Brazil team of 1970, said.

Saldanha's creed was that the biggest crime was getting caught. Bosnich was caught in his infantile gesture at White Hart Lane last week, yet some have sought to pass off his behaviour as "good humoured" and to vilify the "overreaction" of Jewish Tottenham supporters.

How crudely the scribes themselves can appear. And how utterly ignorant Bosnich makes himself out to be. Someone, somewhere, must take a leaf with the highest paid young professionals in the country. They, after all, have more idle time on their hands than anyone in the nine-to-five workforce. Their bodies have to be rested, yet they fill the vacant hours without attempt to put into perspective the world which they travel so handsomely.

They travel more than almost anyone else and travel is supposed to broaden the mind, not to extend the ignorance and isolation of it. If the players are irresponsible and the managers fail to act on the public behalf, then, once again, the forces of common law will enter football's supposedly sacrosanct disciplinary world.

O'Neill did just that and replied in five, withering paragraphs. "I was 'plucked' from law studies at Queen's University, Belfast, not from the queue at the Labour Exchange," he wrote, undermining the original article with an eye for detail that would have made him a formidable opponent in court.

He has mellowed since. Playing under Clough tended to have that effect on dissidents, those who stayed at any rate. There is, however, a purpose to the tale and it is one that his adversaries in the FA Carling Premiership are beginning to realise. Underestimate Martin O'Neill at your peril.

Arriving at Filbert Street, I was told by the car park attendant that O'Neill was the best manager in England. Seven months ago he ranked rather lower in the estimation of supporters, who staged a sit-in demonstration after a

home defeat against Sheffield United. O'Neill refused to shelter in the bunker of his office. Instead, he met fans to explain the situation. Leicester City won six of their remaining eight matches and emerged victorious from the play-offs.

"You either cave in or get stronger and I decided to take the latter option," O'Neill said. "People say that the game was a watershed. After 13 weeks in the job, the last thing I wanted was a watershed. The fact is that there had been a lot of false promises here. The previous manager [Mark McGhee] had upped and left saying the side was good enough to win the league at a stretch. That was ludicrous, because there was no appreciable difference between the top eight or nine sides. But I was landed with that prediction."

Liverpool's first nine matches

have confirmed to O'Neill that the Premiership is far harder league than the old first division that he remembers as a player. There is little chance now of a side emulating Forest in 1977-78 and winning the title immediately after promotion. O'Neill played on the right of midfield that season, opposite John Robertson, now his assistant at Leicester, and admits he could not have wished for a better managerial tutor than Clough.

"People say it is amazing

the way so many of that side have gone into management, but why should it be, because I came to England positively to play football, not just to leave Ireland," he said. "We were relatively secure in Belfast, but events proved that no place there was really secure after all."

O'Neill later discovered

that success could elevate

sportmen above sectarians.

He played in the 1982

World Cup finals in Spain.

sioned by what he considered

interference from the chairman, Robert Chase, at Norwich City, he moved to Leicester, having turned down the job a year earlier.

Contrary to expectations,

Leicester have settled in mid-table in the Premiership, above West Ham United, who they visit today, and praise gushes from O'Neill when he discusses the start of the season. "For years, Leicester have been seen as a selling club. Well, I want to change that image. The way to keep players like Emile Heskey and Neil Lennon is to show them you have ambition. When they see progress is being made and they win matches, they are happy," he said.

"Our problem will come if we lose key people, because I do not have the money to replace them with somebody capable of doing as good a job. But if we survive this season, the Heskeys and the Lennons will see we are going forward." By confounding predictions and staying up, O'Neill will have the final word. Not for the first time.

Presence of Keane at Newcastle gives Keegan food for thought

BY DAVID MADDOCK AND RUSSELL KEMPSON

Newcastle's fruity, and the point is not lost on Ferguson. "They will be forced to attack us and I'm expecting a lot of space to open up," he said.

It is the present state of the home side's defence that will hold the key to the contest. Should they defend as they did in Hungary, then Manchester United will surely repeat their significant victory of last season at St James' Park.

Philippe Albert, however,

dismissed the mounting criticism about Newcastle's defending. "It is unfair in the extreme, and I just can't understand the critics at all," the defender said. "I believe that we are genuinely putting it right."

If the game at St James'

Park promises to be an open affair, then the Merseyside derby is unlikely to follow suit.

Everton have not lost to Liverpool under Joe Royle, their manager, and he is intent on maintaining his record, even if it demands stalling tactics.

Royle will include Dave Watson, the veteran defender, who

has played just 45 minutes of first-team football all season

because of a hernia.

Liverpool have no injury problems, but Roy Evans, the manager, is concerned that his side buck the recent derby trend to maintain their

impressive thrust at the top of the table this season, and he said: "If we are to win the title, then we have to perform in the big games like this."

Football's "feel-good" factor has infiltrated Wimbledon, for a change, and they are making the most of it. Joe Kinnear, the manager, has led his side to six successive victories, a club record, and fifth place in the Premiership. He has even made peace with Holdsworth, his unsettled striker.

Now, even though he cannot find a place in Kinnear's successful side, Holdsworth is talking to Sam Hammam, the club owner, about a possible extension to the two years remaining on his contract.

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SATURDAY OCTOBER 19 1996

CAR 96

CARMART: YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S NEW, AND WHAT'S USED, ON THE FORECOURTS

Cheap Seat's fun

ROADTEST

AFTER BUMPING my head on the door frame and seeing the coffee mug slide off the aerodynamic bonnet, I resolved to see the Seat Alhambra through less misty eyes, Nick Nuttall writes.

After five months driving an E-regulation Yugo (a loan from my wife's grandmother) after the family Audi was dispatched to the scrapheap by a head-on collision) any new car would make me feel like a lottery winner, especially one in which children can be eased rather than shoe-horned into seats without breaking my back.

And so motoring hedonism was mine for several days in the driving seat of the Alhambra, motoring around the Normandy countryside with children, mother and aunt, packets of cornflakes and luggage up to the substantial gunwales.

Gone was the familiar grinding of the Yugo's rear axle, an effect not too dissimilar to a Dakora taking off.

Instead, here was a motorising smoothie which slid serenely over poplar-edged, Gallic country roads. Even my auntie Marjorie, who en-

joys a good natter, was kept entertained and purse-lipped trying to divine the workings of the electric windows.

These seemingly turbocharged gadgets would zip up and down, oblivious to her shouts of 'stop'. In the wake of her attempts to master the controls, other features, fitted as standard, seemed a worthwhile luxury; particularly the air conditioning which meant we could sit in comfort without auntie having to worry about gassing a blast of fresh air from her zippy electric windows.

THE ALHAMBRA, for all its good points, does have a few drawbacks for the serious family man likely to buy a vehicle like this, with its pretensions to be the perfect transport for the nuclear unit. Take that bonnet: it might be fuel-savingly aerodynamic, but on a picnic it's little use to man or beast. The shape instantly dispatches the Thermos, the wine glass and the corned beef tin to the floor.

On a more important note, I



Looks familiar? The Alhambra is a close sibling of costlier MPVs from Ford and VW

found the Alhambra's braking system happily up to the job when fully laden, particularly when a tractor suddenly emerged from a tight bend.

The anarok brigade will also have noticed that, apart from the silvery Seat badge, the Alhambra is a dead ringer for a Ford Galaxy or VW Sharan. That is because the Seat is the product of a joint venture between Ford and VW.

Seat's owner — and to all intents and purposes is the same MPV or 'people mover'.

The difference is the price and extras. The Alhambra includes a three-year unlimited-mileage warranty, twin air bags, roof rails and luggage cover as standard.

SEAT ALHAMBRA

Engine: Four-cylinder 2-litre petrol developing 115bhp at 5,400rpm through a five-speed manual gearbox driving from wheels. Automatic gearbox version available by end of the year.

Performance: 0-60mph about 14.4 seconds, top speed 110mph. Fuel consumption 42.2 mpg at 50mph.

Equipment: Airbags, radio-cassette with eight speakers, front electric windows, air conditioning, three-year warranty, central locking, roof rails, luggage compartment cover.

Price: £16,995

All in all, it means that when the free kit is included, the Seat, with a basic price of £16,445 on the road, is about £2,000 cheaper than rivals. So

why buy a Ford or VW when you can rush out to buy the same vehicle? You just have to forego the familiar brand-image badges.

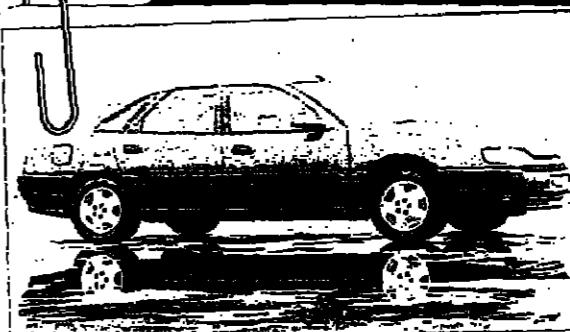
SPARE PARTS

MORE THAN 90 years after heads bobbed from behind hedges to warn motorists of police ahead, the AA is celebrating a milestone: nine million members, a third of all drivers, Kevin Eason writes.

It grew out of the Brighton Motor Road Patrol which kept watch on the Brighton Road to warn motorists of upcoming speed traps. In 1905, the Automobile Association was founded to represent the interests of the motorist.

Now the AA has 3,800 patrols, more than any other motoring organisation, and handles around 30 million calls for help and information annually. It is a major business, from insurance to finan-

USED CAR BRIEF



Renault Safrane

Before the Safrane there was the 25, a meandering and bloated executive car. Renault launched the Safrane in 1993 as a five-door hatchback to boost the company's executive appeal. Initially available as a petrol-powered 1.6-valve 2-litre with 135 brake horsepower, there was also a powerful 3-litre V6. A year later came the upmarket RT, with 175bhp. From 1996, a 2.0-litre 16V model had eight valves instead of 12 and less power while a 2.5-litre turbo-diesel with automatic transmission was added.

GOOD NEWS

Street cred almost everywhere. Even poverty-level Safranes come with tinted glass and anti-lock brakes while most have air conditioning and power steering is standard. Best news is that, despite the Safrane meant the death of the undriven and badge-like Renault 25.

BAD NEWS

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cial services, credit cards, driving schools and hotel bookings services.

TIMES HAVE rarely been better for Fiat in this country with booming sales. Now the range is being extended with turbo-diesel Bravo and Brava models, and a Brava 1.6SX which gets a four-speed automatic transmission.

The 1.6 SX transmission is mated to the five-door hatchback's tried-and-tested 16-valve 1.6-litre, which can pump out 103bhp, so that acceleration from standstill to 62mph is still a respectable 12.2 seconds and top speed 74mph. Fuel consumption is 41mpg on average.

The diesels use a 1.9-litre power pack, worth either 75bhp (44mpg average fuel consumption) or 100bhp (44mpg). Prices will be announced soon.

SAFETY RATING

Die 12v on all four wheels, matched to latest generation anti-lock braking on all models ensure the car stops as well as it goes. Bigger is best when it comes to safety and the Safrane has the size and weight to hold its own.

REPLACEMENT PARTS

(Prices include VAT)
Clutch assembly £170;
full exhaust £375;
catalytic converter £225; headlamp £280; front brakepads (pair) £40;
alternator £185 (exchange); tyre
£50 to £70.

OVERALL

Renault's big cars, unlike their cheeky smaller models, always struggle with image, or lack of it. The Safrane was preceded by the Renault 25, little loved here, and the Safrane is fast becoming the Cinderella of the range. The car is big, while fast depreciation on new models means they fill all the classic requirements of a lot of car for not much money second-hand. For luxury lovers seek out the Executive and V6 models.

Audi v BMW in coupé war



The A3: priced to undercut

AUDI IS attacking BMW's aspirational 3-Series Compact by pitching prices for its new A3 coupé up to £2,000 lower. The three-door A3 will cost £13,795 yet still be packed with goodies, such as anti-lock brakes, immobiliser, twin airbags, electric windows and power steering. The top car in the range will be the 1.8T Sport at £17,560.

The A3 is another brick in the wall of the company's changing image, from frumpy bridesmaid to Mercedes and BMW. Germany's Big Two, to outright challenger. That is why Audi might not bring any five-door versions here aiming instead to pitch the coupé's image as a prestige competitor to BMW. Around 5,000 A3s could be sold here

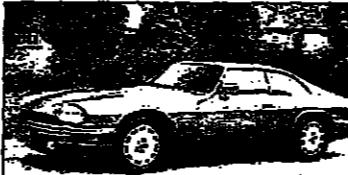
next year, among 30,000 Audis, a substantial improvement on the 20,000 cars of 1993.

Audi needed to act, with BMW increasing the pace. BMW this week unveiled its gorgeous Z3 Roadster in Britain and promised all 3,330 advance orders would be supplied at £19,950 during 1997.

Fears were high that BMW would be overwhelmed by demand for its new American-built sports car, with its 1.9-litre engine, but the British arm has secured production of 4,000 right-hand-drive cars.

The Kia Pride is cheap and cheerful.

FORECOURT



Mileage no deterrent on the XJS

JAGUAR'S XJS grand tourer is a popular second-hand buy, reports the CAP Black Book. Convertibles, from 1990-91 in particular, are doing better than coupés, and high mileage is not a deterrent, though a full service history is a must, writes Vaughan Freeman.

When new, the XJS V12 was £12,000 more expensive than the six-cylinder cars, but the V12's 12mpg fuel consumption means little difference between second-hand prices. Expect to pay under £20,000 for a 1991 4-litre convertible and around £25,000 for a 1995 version.

Land Rover's Discovery TD5 turbodiesel is good value too, and pre-1993 cars are best value. Image is second to none, insurance costs are relatively low and resale values strong. Expect to pay slightly more than £12,500 for a 1991 J-reg five-door TD5 with under 50,000 miles on the clock.

The Kia Pride is cheap and cheerful.

represents excellent value, and is cheap to run. But it runs on fantastically daff-looking whitewall tyres.

The LX model represents best value, the 5-door in particular, so expect to pay under £3,000 for a K-reg car with under 40,000 miles on the clock.

Beware ex-driving school cars and any with above-average mileages. The Pride is a remodeled Mazda 323 so there is reassurance that the heart of the car is mechanically sound, plus the added advantage that any car costing less than £3,000 second-hand, if looked after, can never lose much money when you come to sell it.

The KIA Pride is cheap and cheerful.

FORD

SCORPIO 2.0 Ghia 4 Dr. V6, 16V, 1995. Antelope, 4,600 miles, £15,500. Tel: 01530 560066.

HONDA NSX

NSX. NEX Coupe. Manual/Black/Black. Leather. 30K miles. Tel: 01750 671555.

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Metalic Grey, manual.

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95 4.0 Sport Auto. Ceramic red, full custom leather, 7K miles, sun air bags, rechargeable grill, a/c, cruise, sunroof car.

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XJR

Supercharged, May '95, 12k Auto. Specialty built by Jaguar in White with bright metalwork. Looks a picture. £39,950.

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Coupe, Sapphire Blue, cream leather, classic wood, available immediately. Offers.

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JAGUAR & DAIMLER

XJS

V12 2.2 Auto.

British Racing Green.

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6,000 Miles, as new.

Showroom Condition.

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tions but not able to deal with the brightest light.

Serengeti specialises in sunglasses that give clear sight for driving, with photochromic lenses which adjust to the light and absorb damaging ultra-violet rays. But style also plays a part and Serengeti makes frames in a range of styles, from classic shades to clip-ons for motorists who have prescription lenses. We have 20 gorgeous pairs of Serengeti glasses to give away, so that *Car 96* readers will be able to see clearly. To enter all you need to do is answer the following question on what day, and at what approximate time, was the last partial eclipse of the sun? — and get it to us on a postcard, by October 28. Reply to Serengeti competition, *Car 96*, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Usual rules apply.

CORRECTION

In our *Cars from Hell* column of July 27, we incorrectly suggested, later in the article, that the TVR Centre at Arkley had asked the dissatisfied owner of a TVR Chimaera never to purchase one again. We apologise to the TVR Centre for this error.

ACCESSORIES

WHO

is one of the biggest makers of quality tyres you've never heard of?

Super quality, safety conscious, high performance Toyo tyres are researched, developed and tested to the same exacting standards as any other leading make of tyre. What's more, they're backed by over 50 years experience. In fact, we're probably the biggest tyre maker you've never heard of! Now available from a dealer near you for every car, every driver, every season. Next time you need to replace a tyre make sure you ask for Toyo by name. For your local authorised Toyo stockist and free colour brochure ring FREEPHONE 0800 033 044.

TOYO

THAT'S WHO

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Steelmakers are helping our flabby cars slim down, says Vaughan Freeman

Weight of things to come?

Like Billy Bunter on a cream-tea diet, today's steel-based cars are getting ever faster as manufacturers bow to customers' tastes for greater comfort, and to legislation demanding greater safety and fewer emissions.

Air conditioning is the latest luxury that drivers cannot do without. In Europe one car in three has air conditioning, a figure that will rise to 50 per cent within four years, and which adds yet more weight to the car.

Yester year's push-button radio was ousted by the radio-cassette and now there is in-car phone and CD player with racking system in the boot. On-board alarms are a way of life, as are roof-mounted ski-boxes and cycle racks. More weight again.

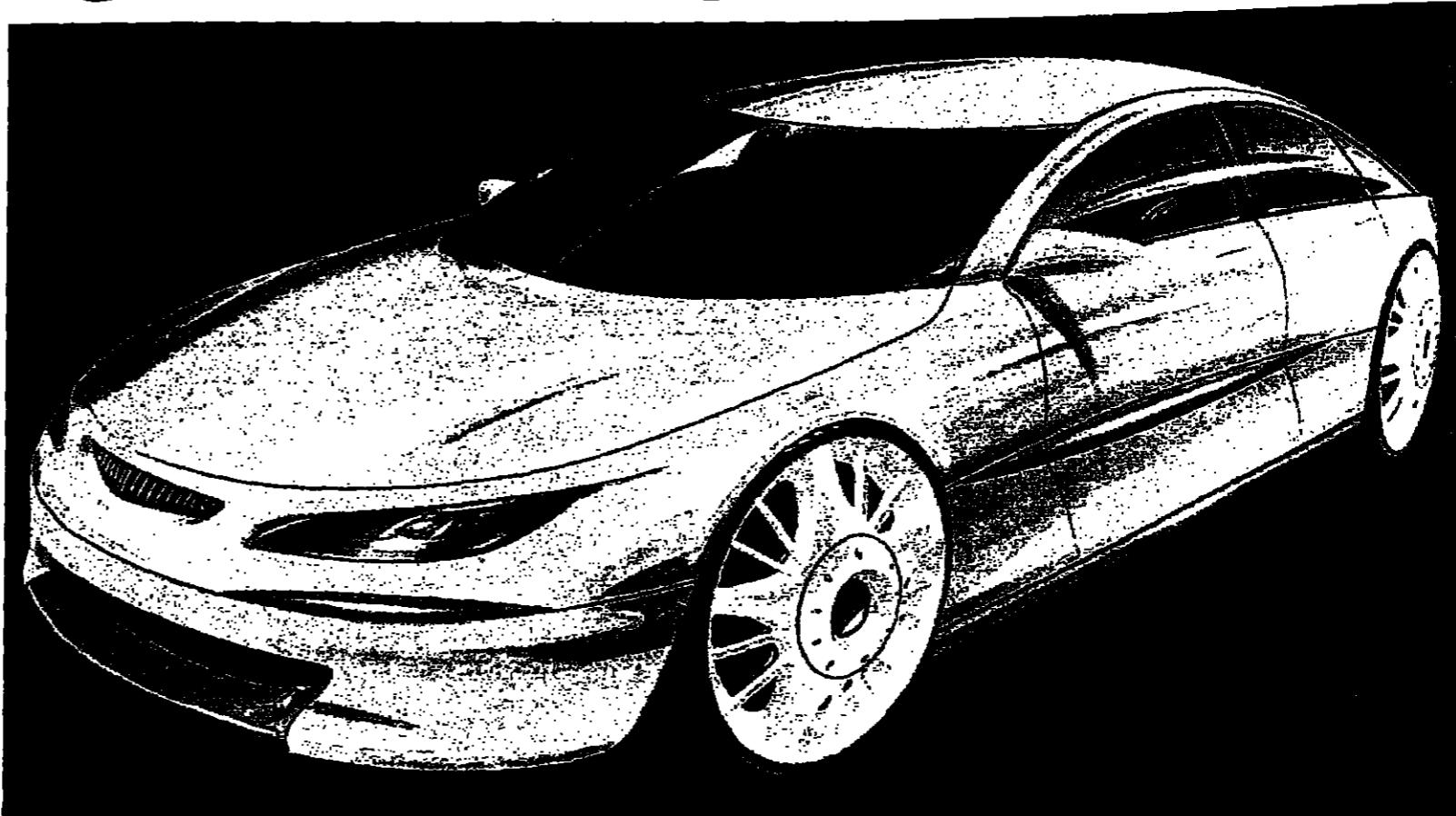
New emissions regulations to be introduced in the year 2000 and more again that are proposed for 2005 will also add weight, just as the addition from the early 1990s of catalytic converters added weight. Meanwhile almost every new car is now fitted with an airbag as standard for the driver, with side-impact door beams.

If there is an automotive equivalent of the Nigel Lawson diet, it is usually offered as a cocktail of ingredients including aluminium (expensive and difficult to work), plastic, and the exotic and eye-wateringly pricey carbon-fibre materials derived from Formula One racing.

Can steel then survive as the carmaker's material of choice? Ten years ago everyone was confidently forecasting that we would be driving to the funeral of the petrol engined car in its battery-powered successor. But now it seems that the end of steel is nigh.

Yet every year the world's carmakers consume something like 35 million tons of steel, and more than half of a modern car is built of steel.

If steel is seen as somewhat



Light metal: a concept car drawn up by a worldwide steelmaker's consortium committed to developing lighter, stronger and greener vehicles

old-fashioned technology, it is the image, not the material, that is outdated. It is one of the few materials that is 100 per cent recyclable. Almost half the steel in a brand new car is in fact "old", recycled steel living a second, third or fourth life, and in the near future around 95 per cent of the steel in a car will be recycled.

The problem for car manufacturers is to reverse the trend of cars getting heavier, while staying with steel, a material they are familiar with and which has few rivals for its practicality and versatility.

To help them, British Steel has established its own Auto-motive Engineering Group (AEG), based in Coventry, which will have a staff of 30, aimed at helping carmakers and components manufacturers come up with lightweight steel and parts for the future.

tion of new technology, while exploiting the inherent high quality and low cost advantages of steel, its crash-worthiness, ease of manufacture and recyclability.

Many groups will work between the steel and automotive industries that are safer, more durable and easier to manufacture and recycle. The aim is a 30 per cent weight reduction, but we are not going to get there in one leap.

In collaboration with more than 30 other steel companies, British Steel is also taking part in a \$20 million worldwide venture known as ULSAB, the UltraLight Steel Auto Body, to share research and development of the new svelte, slim and lightweight steel-car world.

Dr Edington says, "The idea behind ULSAB is to take a third out of the weight of the

car by using new steel and new steel technologies."

But surely steel is steel? Not so. New steels using high-carbon and alloys are being developed which will last longer, and resist wear and fatigue more effectively, while at the same time giving greater strength and reducing weight.

Another avenue will be to collaborate on the design of cars right from the start, so that the steel experts can help car designers and manufacturers eradicate design flaws which result in more steel than necessary being used, so adding unnecessary weight.

The result, if all goes according to plan, will be steel-bodied cars far stronger and safer than today's, despite having shed a third of their weight, so that their owners can then add even more luxuries, bigger stereo speakers and more bicycle racks, without worrying about what their vehicle tips the scales at.

AA GRIDLOCK GUIDE

● LONDON

A27 Orpington; roadworks on Sevenoaks Road.
A217 Wandsworth; roadworks on the south side of Wandsworth bridge.
A400 Kentish Town; means southbound traffic diverted from the Archway roundabout.
A406 East Finchley; traffic down to a single lane.
A4005 Harrow; temporary lights on Headstone Road.

● SOUTH-EAST

M4 junction 10; entry and exit sliproads at the Reading East (A329) junction closed overnight.
A4 Reading; restrictions and lane closures.
A404 High Wycombe; temporary lights.
M25 junction 2-3; contraflow.

● SOUTH-WEST

A38 Near Liskeard; contraflow.
A381 Teignmouth; restrictions for roadworks.
M5 junctions 17-20; contraflow with a 50mph speed limit across the Avonmouth Bridge.
A38 Gloucester; major roadworks on Cole Avenue.
A303 Yarbury Hill; contraflow.

● MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA

A500 Telford - Stoke on Trent; contraflow.
A6 Lockington; contraflow from just north of the M1 junction 24 to Sawley Island (B6540).
A137 Ipswich; traffic down to a single lane.
A41 Wolverhampton; temporary lights on Bilston Road between Eagle Street and Chillington Street.

● NORTH

M6 junctions 20-21;

closures between the Major and Newport junctions. A4067 Swansea; contraflow at Ystrysgarn.

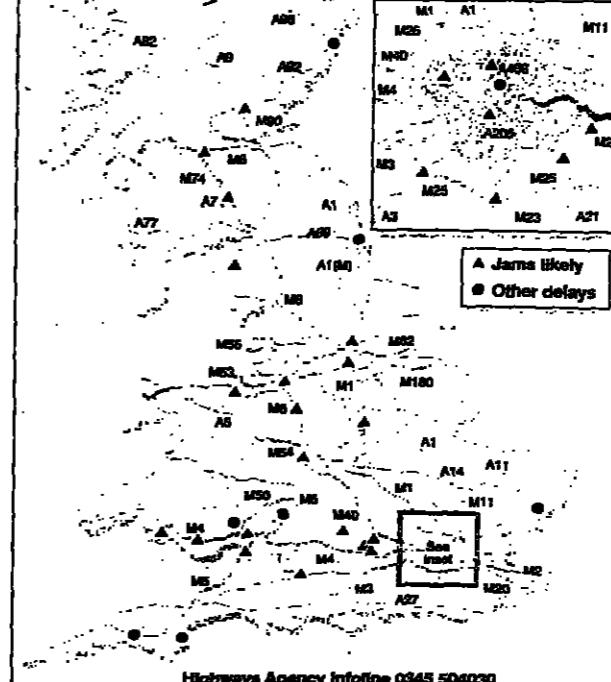
● SCOTLAND
A90 Aberdeen; restrictions and lane closures on the bridge of Don.
A86 Between Cockermouth (A5086) and Bassenthwaite Lake (B5291); temporary lights.

M77 junction 23, Dumbreck Interchange; no right turn from the M77 onto Dumbreck Road.

A74 Between Millbank and Paddyside; a single lane each way.

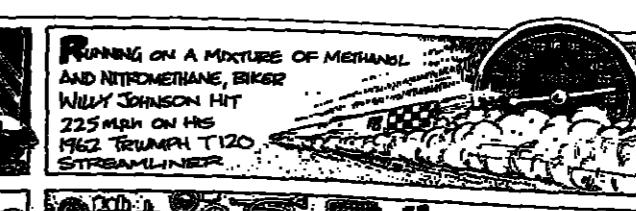
A9 Perth; restrictions in both directions.

MAJOR ROADWORKS



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AUTOFAX by Les Evans and David Long



DR DASHBOARD

Haven't these new cars been built yet?

Q This new steel car sounds great. I can't wait to see it at the motor show. What is it like?

A Afraid I don't know. The car was launched at the motor show but actually nobody has built it yet.

Q Never mind, how sexy is the new baby Land Rover, which I read so much about this week? That was launched at the motor show, wasn't it?

A Actually that isn't at the show either. This is the not-the-car-launch show. The baby Land Rover will not appear until next year's motor show at the earliest.

Q What is the point of making a fuss about a car that doesn't exist and which we can't see?

A Lots of reasons. BMW wanted to counter the bad publicity it's been getting since its takeover of Rover. Announcing the £350 million project proved BMW is investing lots of lovely money in Rover and builds expectations among buyers.

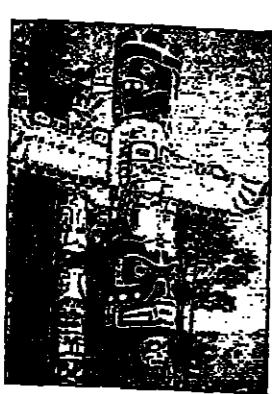
Q What's the point of going to the blessed Motor Show then?

A So you can see lots of cars which have only just reached Britain, of course. You can see that fabulous new Jaguar XK8, Ferrari's new 550 and the pretty little Lotus Elise — three cars new to this country and among dozens of models on show.

Q What do you mean dozens? Are there more than usual then?

A Lots more. Carmakers have become very clever at using the same basic components and chassis to make several different cars. So instead of turning out cars by the 200,000 all the same shape, they are putting new bodies on similar floors to extend production of conventional saloons and hatchbacks into convertibles, estates, people carriers and sports cars. The result is more choice than at almost any time in the history of the industry, a selection of models you can see in Birmingham in the next week.

Silent, S
Swallows
any...



The best of Canada from the Rockies to Montreal
Pages 18, 19

THE TIMES Travel

Why the British are staying away from France
Page 21



The town that tourism forgot

In the shadow of a breathtaking cathedral, bounded by a forgotten river, beats the ancient heart of Gerona: a medieval Jewish ghetto

All great or once-great cities have sobriquets: none more so than Gerona, a Catalan gem neglected for the past 200 years. "City of a Thousand Sieges", "Barcelona's little sister", "The City of Split Personality" — modern Gerona has more than its fair share of handles but none tells the whole story.

At the confluence of the Ter and Onyar rivers, in a valley surrounded by tumbling hills, Gerona has an eye-popping history and a palpable present-day *ambiente*. The Catalonia *Generalitat* calls it "a city for the 1990s waiting to explode". This may be so — but for the time being, one of Gerona's greatest attributes is that tourists leave it pretty much alone, even though it lends its name to the nearby charter airport which serves the Costa Brava.

It was not always so. Conquered in turn by the Romans and Moors, Gerona is used to being in the spotlight. Suleiman sacked the city, Pippin the Short overran it, Philip the Daring re-established it, Napoleon played diplomatic volleyball with it. But the adversity that shaped Gerona has rendered it unique.

Driving up the A7 from Barcelona and feeling my way through the spider's web of new roads which encircle the city, I came into town via the Plaza de la Independencia — a pint-sized, colonnaded, neo-classical square — and knew at a glance this city was for me. Behind the square lies the Riu Onyar, which divides the old and new towns. River in name but stagnant in nature, the Onyar slops against its banks like an unloved canal in some unfashionable quarter of Venice. On the old town side, medieval houses of umber, sienna and slate-grey abut the water, while the iron bridges seem to span not only the Onyar but history itself, reluctantly bonding old with new.

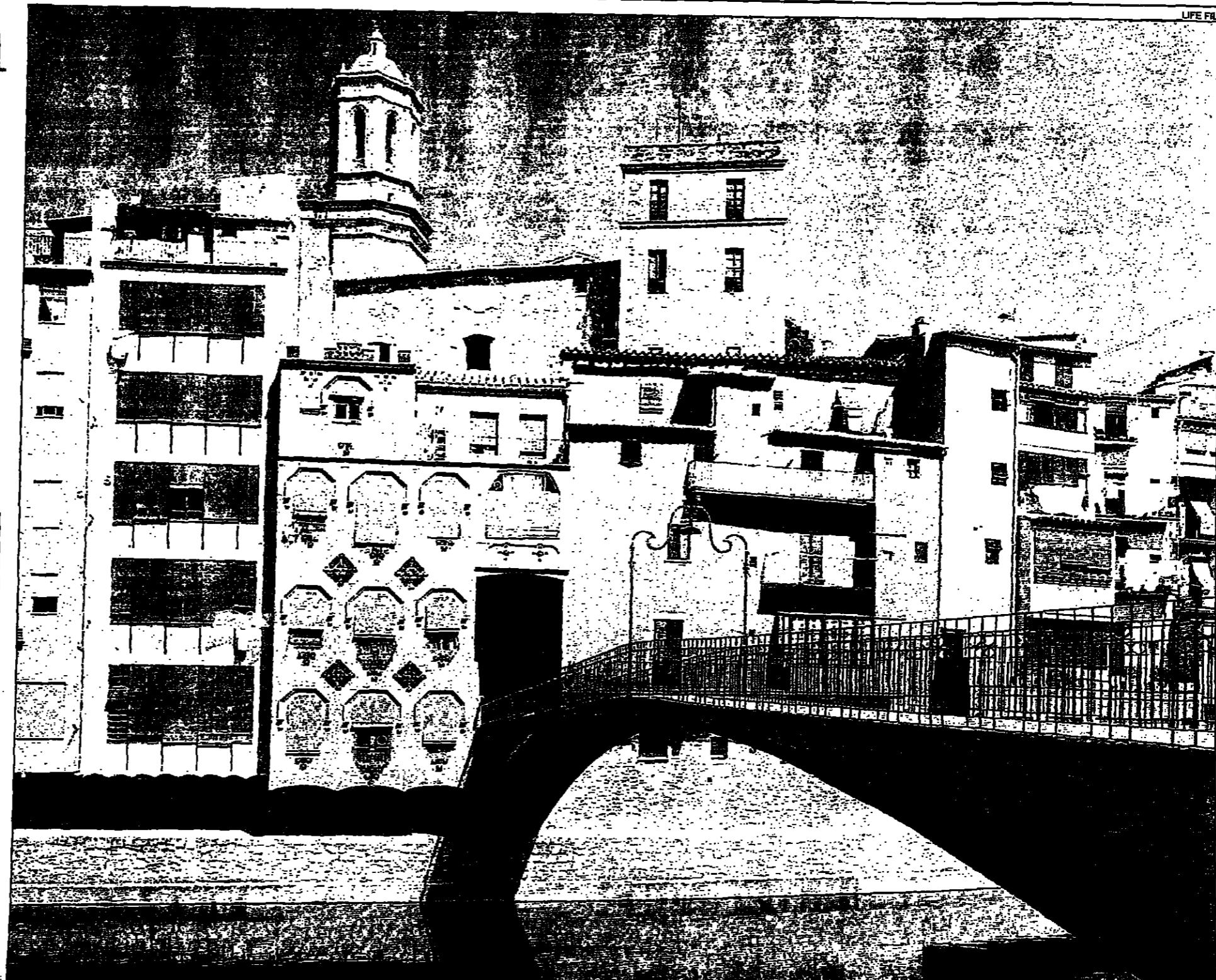
I crossed at the Pont de Gómez and, reaching the northern bank, dived under a stone portal and slid effortlessly back 800 years into the *Call*, Gerona's medieval heart. Here, in a ghetto



bounded by the river, the Sant Llorenç and the Cathedral, the city's flourishing 12th-century Jews founded the school of mysticism and developed the *Kabbalah*. While the *Torah* (Mosaic law) focuses on what God requires of man, *Kabbalah* uses words, codes and numbers to explore the essence of God himself. Here, along the Calle de la Força, wandered the *Call*'s most famous son, Moses ben Nahman — Nahmanides, a modern prophet of Judaism, his mind absorbed in philosophy, alchemy, acrostics and the Almighty.

Modish boutiques and bars — for let us not forget we are in trendy Catalunya — punctuate the dark streets of the *Call*, bellying its ancient profundity. But Gerona is a university town with a modern appetite for learning. Cycles in alleyways tell you as much and, in the hot siesta hour, the twang of Dylan's *Lay Lady Lay* from an open window on the Carrer Ciutadans confirms it.

Halfway up the steps on the Carrer Sand Llorenç, the Centre de Bonastre Ca Porta is a medieval house in the throes of painstaking reconstruction by the *Generalitat*. With maps, artifacts and headstones gathered from the old Jewish cemeteries of Catalunya, it



The Pont de Gómez crosses the Onyar river and leads to the *Call*, the Jewish ghetto that is Gerona's medieval heart, thankfully as yet undiscovered by the tourist hordes

SATURDAY BOOKS

Bardot, Buddy Holly, Elmore Leonard and *The Times* Bestsellers

THE DIRECTORY PAGES 7-12

provides a walking tour of the history of church architecture. There are Romanesque cloisters, the medieval nave and 16th-century Museu del Claustre, which now houses most of Gerona's ecclesiastical treasures. Among these are the *Código del Beato*, a 10th-century illustrated commentary on the Apocalypse, and the 11th-century *Tapis de la Creación* (Tapestry of the Creation).

Overwhelmed? You will be, not least by the view as you leave the cathedral by its southern doors and descend the largest roccoco stairway in Europe to the Place below. Nearby, the Banys Arabs (Arab Baths) are unmissable, based on a Roman design souped up with Moorish decoration.

Turn left at the top of Llorenç, follow the steep and tortuous paths of the *Call* and you come to Gerona's Cathedral. This is a structure of superlatives: along with that of Palma de Mallorca, it is remarkable in having a single nave — this one is the widest in Christendom. Started in the 11th century and completed 700 years later, the cathedral effectively

aims to tell the story of Gerona's Jews. And if fact occasionally gives way to conjecture, go with it — for the Bonastre is a great undertaking in a country which even 30 years ago had yet to come to terms with its Jewish past.

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International skiing: Part three of Doug Sager's round-up of the resorts features the pick of Switzerland

Unbeatable, yes. Affordable, maybe

THE NATION that invented the winter holiday is now a no-go area in the minds of most British skiers. Both ski guidebooks and tour operators' brochures have drastically cut back their Swiss pages. But the notion that Switzerland is only for the super-rich is ridiculous.

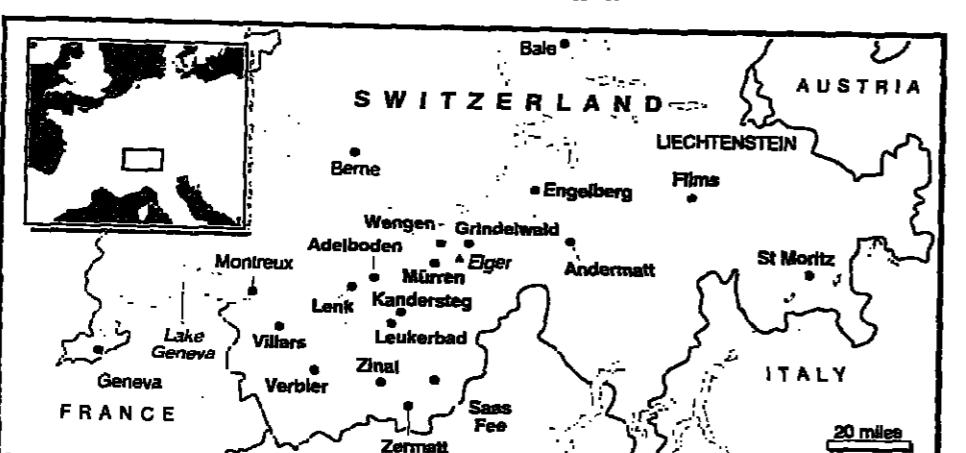
That Switzerland is expensive is unavoidable. But Swiss medical services, routine helicopter rescues off the pistes, not to mention communications, banking and hotel infrastructure, are all of a far higher standard than elsewhere in the Alps.

This week sterling was averaging a 14 per cent improvement over the Swiss franc from a year ago. And there are signs that Swiss indifference to the British market is over.

Switzerland Tourism (0171-734 1921), in collaboration with Swissair and local

tourism bodies, is funding free ski pass and free ski week offers as well as a voucher booklet for dining and shopping bargains. As of January, Switzerland Tourism is privatising its travel service, which will open as the Switzerland Travel Centre (0171-734 4578).

Swiss resorts themselves are attempting to overcome their mercenary image. Determined to ditch its title as "the most expensive ski pass in Europe", Verbier has dramatically dropped its prices. A six-day ski pass in Verbier this winter will cost SFr282 (£141) instead of SFr297, a saving of £29 per week over last year's cost. All other top Swiss resorts, except Crans Montana, kept ski pass prices at last year's Swiss franc level, which means savings in sterling. And Zermatt is allowing children under the age of ten to ski for free.



CLASSIC RESORTS

WINTER holidays were invented in St Moritz in 1864. And even today no resort in the world comes close to St Moritz for high-season high jinks. No resort has more grand old hotels in the four and five-star category. Polo and horse racing, even golf, on ice have been copied by other resorts. But the Gour-

met Festival and the bone-shattering Cresta Run remain unique, as does St Moritz's "champagne" climate.

Zermatt's glacier skiing, the highest in the Alps for beginners, leads on to Italy, all the way down to Cervinia, with payment of a hefty surcharge. But it is the looming Matterhorn and Zermatt's unparalleled

mountain restaurants which fill the village's car-free lanes to capacity each winter with visitors who simply refuse to ski anywhere else, at any price.

Saas Fee's pearly glaciers hanging over snow-choked streets lined with wooden barns on stone stilts create an awe-inspiring backdrop to what has become Switzerland's liveliest snowboarding scene and skiing which is blessed with one of the most advanced lift systems in the Alps.

CIRCUSES

ON ITS OWN, Switzerland cannot compete in the top league of interlinked ski circus networks. But the Portes du Soleil ski pass region shared with France is the fourth largest in the Alps and has no better headquarters than modestly priced Champéry, an easy 90-minute drive from Geneva airport.

Switzerland's biggest skiing area, the 400km of pistes of the Four Valleys centred in Verbier, is the focus of the most varied and exciting lift-accessed off-piste skiing in the Alps, not to mention a wealth of reasonably priced self-catering and chalet accommodation.

Little known to British skiers is the 225km expanse of the White Arena spread around the sunny cliff bands of Flims, Waldhaus and Lax in eastern Switzerland. This is an intermediate skiing paradise, with an excellent snow record and charming old-fashioned hotels.

Two of Switzerland's most evocative car-free villages, Wengen with its central children's playground and ski slope and chocolate-box chalet Müren, are complemented by the true grit of ski mountaineering in Grindelwald, dominated by the cold face of the Eiger.

These delightful villages make up the 183km Jungfrau region, connected by cog-wheel railway rising to the highest train depot in Europe (at 3,454m), from which skiers have the option of descending Europe's longest glacier, the Aletsch.

It is not car-free but there are more children — and cows — in Andermatt's snow-covered streets than motor vehicles, yet the resort is not represented in any tour operator's brochure.

Engelberg can guarantee snow on its 3,000m glacier and, when conditions are right, the Laub off-piste powderfields promise some of the least-crowded deep-



Zermatt, with the highest glacier skiing in the Alps for beginners, attracts loyal visitors who refuse to ski elsewhere

snow skiing in the Alps. The village is not quaint, but features a number of old-fashioned hotels with huge rooms and prices below the Swiss norm.

The world's only rotating cable car offers spectacular views and is a massive hit with children, as is Engelberg's night-time sledging.

Villars has the convenience of being less than 90 minutes from Geneva airport by car and the family attractions of ample easy skiing fed in to the nearby glacier runs at Diablerets. Rail connections to Montreux and Lake Geneva allow non-skiers to take day-trips to the Swiss Riviera. Furthermore, parents can be assured that the Vaudoise Alps appeal to helter-skelter ski-racer types, and children can be left to make their own way around Villars' less than precipitous slopes in safety.

Leukerbad is an old spa town where the spa complex has been recently modernised and where the 30-room five-star Sources des Alpes provides the ultimate in understated elegance, so far unknown to the British market and unrepresented by any tour operator. Skiing is limited on the piste but the off-piste itineraries really are

the stuff of legend. And Zinal is the Verbier of tomorrow. Somehow discovered by Club Med, this hamlet, drowned in snow at the dead end of a lonesome drive up from the Rhone Valley, is served by only one cable car and seven surface lifts. Club Med says that Zinal is for infants and small children, but older skiers will find it an untouched powder playground too.

SWISS FACTS

TOUR OPERATORS

■ Britain's biggest tour operators — with the exception of Swiss-owned Inghams (0181-780 4444) which goes to 13 Swiss resorts — have either abandoned Switzerland to the specialists, as in the case of Airtours and First Choice, or limited their exposure. Crystal (0181-399 5144) and Thomson (0990 329329) both go to just three Swiss resorts; Neilson (0113-239 4555) only to Verbier.

■ Made to Measure (01243 533333) will prepare holiday packages to 31 Swiss resorts on an à la carte basis.

■ Swiss Travel Service (01992 456123) offers scheduled flights to 16 Swiss resorts.

■ Kuoni (01306 742500) is a worldwide Swiss travel company with holidays in 16 Swiss resorts.

■ Headwater (01606 48699) is a cross-country specialist which this year adds Kandersteg to its brochure.

■ Ski Esprit (01252 61789) offers non-smoking chalets with a money-back childminding guarantee in Verbier.

■ Ski Verbier (0171-358 0044) has some of the highest standards of cuisine and best luxury chalets in Verbier.

■ Flexiski (0171-352 0044) has the best choice of hotels and/or chalets for flexible breaks in Verbier.

■ Club Med (0171-225 1066) features its holidays in St Moritz, Villars, Zinal and five other Swiss locations.

■ Powder Byrne (0181-871 3300) maintains a permanent base in Grindelwald and employs Switzerland's top-rated mountain guides in its five resorts.

■ The Ski Company (0171-730 5551) last year expanded its luxury chalets to include a penthouse flat in Klosters.

TOURIST INFORMATION

■ The Swiss are changing their telephone numbers. The following tourist offices will change to the new numbers below in November:

Adelboden 33 673 8080; Crans Montana 27 485 0404; Kandersteg 33 675 2233; Lenk 33 733 3131;

Saas Fee 27 957 1457;

Verbier 27 771 6222;

Wengen 33 855 1414;

Zermatt 27 967 0181

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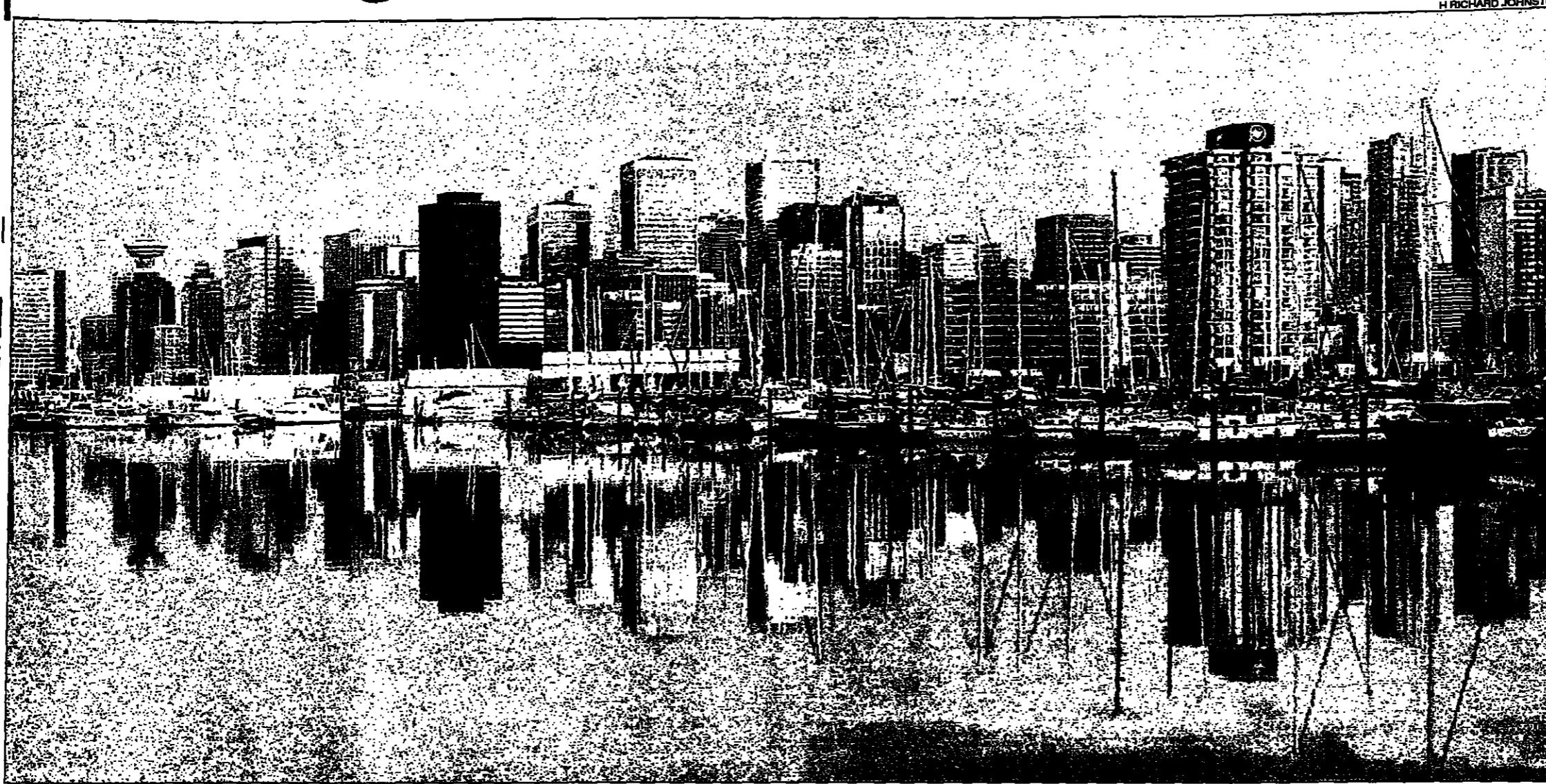
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Canada: Vancouver, the lumberjack's home, is a city that knows how to relax and have a good time...

Nothing but the best in Boomtown



Canada: Vancouver's skyline provides a dramatic backdrop to its harbour, the source of its development and wealth. The wilderness, however, with skiing, climbing and white-water rafting, is not far away

Certain cities make me wonder if I could live there — Barcelona, Paris, New York. Vancouver is another. When I'm there I spend my time peering into the windows of houses, watching people walking their dogs on the beach at sunset, sitting in cafés staring at the city map, and thinking: "Could I do that? Could that be me? Would I be happy here?"

I grew up in British Columbia, the province of which Vancouver is the urban jewel — but I left when I was 17 and have no idea what it might be like to live there as an adult. But it's a great place to have a holiday.

Relatively unscarred by

the 1990s recession that has battered the rest of Canada, Vancouver has boomed for much of the past decade, ever since playing host to Expo 86. Like its near neighbour to the south, Seattle, it's the place to which people want to move.

It is one of the few Canadian cities where you don't have to spend half the year shovelling snow off your doorstep and scraping ice off your car windshield. The climate is fairly benevolent — sunny mild summers and damp mildewy winters that bring to mind the temperate rainforest that once covered much of this coast.

The city is possessed of a kind of Pacific Northwest lazipland mentality, the good life pursued above and

beyond all else. Vancouverites believe in getting the best out of everything and this appears to translate into great food, clean air, and easy access to myriad outdoor sports. Not for them modern urban angst — at the weekend they're more likely to barbecue a salmon, talk about the environment, and admire each other's mountain bikes.

With its organic supermarkets and all-night gourmet seafood restaurants, Vancouver is definitely a place to go if you are interested in food. The weak Canadian dollar makes eating out inexpensive and you can indulge in whatever culinary ethnicity you desire, from Ethiopian to the ubiquitous

Californian-influenced West Coast cuisine. Enormous and desirable muffins are everywhere — blueberry, cranberry, pumpkin, carrot. The smoked salmon, which in no way resembles the anaemic strips of limp flesh on offer in Britain — must not be missed. It is wet-smoked from the half-dozen varieties of pacific salmon that team up the rivers of the province on the way to spawning grounds every year.

Granville Island, a redeveloped point of land beneath Granville Bridge on False Creek, is home to the splendid Public Market, a foodie paradise, as well as art galleries, a theatre, restaurants, and the Emily Carr

school of Art and Design. But it is the Chinese restaurants that really make eating in Vancouver unique, redeeming one's entire notion of a Chinese meal. The Chinese population of this city is as old as the Caucasian — "coolie" labour was imported during the nineteenth century to help to build the railroad. Chinatown covers about 20 city blocks and the pavements heave with people all shopping and eating. Over the past ten years this old and settled population has been hugely augmented by an influx of people, and money, from Hong Kong. In the run up to Chinese rule in 1997, Vancouver has been the preferred destination of many.

The accessibility of the vast, untrammeled wilderness of this relatively uninhabited corner of the world means that Vancouver is a great starting point for all manner of excursions into nature, from ocean kayaking and mountain climbing to white-water rafting. An hour and half up the coast is Whistler, currently the most successful and highly praised of North American ski resorts. In summer there is whale-watching as well as day trips to the network of Gulf Islands wedged between the mainland and Vancouver Island. In spring you can ski in the morning, have lunch in the city, and then sail all afternoon.

Within the city limits there are also endless opportunities for communing with the great outdoors. The spectacular Capilano Suspension Bridge is in North Vancouver, just across the Lions Gate Bridge; a mile further up the Capilano River is the Salmon Hatchery, and a mile beyond is the Grouse Mountain skyride.

The driftwood strewn city beaches are peaceful as well as extensive. Stanley Park, an enormous wooded parkland in the city centre, surrounded by water on three sides, has lakes, woods and gardens as well as a zoo, an aquarium, a cricket pitch, and a seawall promenade more than six miles long. Kitsilano and Jericho Beaches, with their stunning views of the downtown high-rise core set against the

backdrop of the Cascade Mountains, are good places to picnic and walk.

British Columbia's acres of endowment lands contain the Pacific Spirit Regional Park, providing ample space for solitary treks through the forest. The University of British Columbia is also home to the Museum of Anthropology, its collection of West Coast Aboriginal Art unrivaled. British Columbia is the land of totem poles, ceremonial masks, and hand-carved Haida war canoes; the city's galleries provide livelihoods for many aboriginal carvers, some of whom make glorious silver, copper and jade jewellery.

Vancouver has transformed itself since its not-so-long-past days as a grubby industrial port full of lumberjacks and fishermen. The city does not look eastward toward Toronto, but situates itself firmly on the Pacific Rim, extending its welcome westward, to Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. With a population of over a million, it prides itself on a laid-back lifestyle, simultaneously urban and natural. I can't say if I'd want to live there, but it's a great place to spend a week.

KATE PULLINGER
• The author was a guest of British Airways and Avis provided a car.



Totem pole in Vancouver

FACT FILE

■ FLIGHTS: British Airways (0345 22747) fly direct daily from London Heathrow to Vancouver. Economy fares range from £439 to £519 for flights booked 21 days in advance for a minimum of seven nights. Air Canada (0990 247 226) also has direct flights daily from London to Vancouver; fares range from £349 to £489 for flights booked seven days in advance, travelling midweek.

■ PACKAGES: Trailfinders (0171-937 5400) do tailor-made holidays that include flights, hotels and car hire, starting at £672 per person and £931 for two people for one week. Going Places (0181-889 0849) offers packages through British Airways, flights and four-star accommodation for seven nights for £690. Travel Pack (0990 747 101) have a three-night city break, including airfare, half-day sightseeing in Vancouver, full-day excursion to Victoria, from £579 per person.

■ CAR RENTAL: the author was supplied a car courtesy of Avis (0990 900500). Hire for a Group B car for one week starts at £169 plus 14 per cent local tax. All major car-hire firms operate out of Vancouver airport — public transport is not one of the city's strong points.

■ HOTELS: for accommodation downtown at the top of the market try either the Four Seasons (00 1 604 689 9333) or the Hyatt Regency (00 1 604 683 1234); more economical is the Best Western Chateau Granville (00 1 604 669 7070).

■ RESTAURANTS: The Naam, 24-hour gourmet seafood, West 4th St, and McDonald Bo Kung, Chinese, Main and 14th. Sammons, on Haro and Denman, has West Coast cuisine, wonderful Martinis. Typical price for a substantial meal, with drinks, is about \$20 (£10) per person.

■ TOURIST OFFICE: for information in the UK write to British Columbia House, 1 Regent Street, London SW1. The Canadian High Commission operates a premium rate information line on 0891 715000 or you can write to the Visit Canada Centre, 62-65 Trafalgar Square, London, WC2N 5DY.

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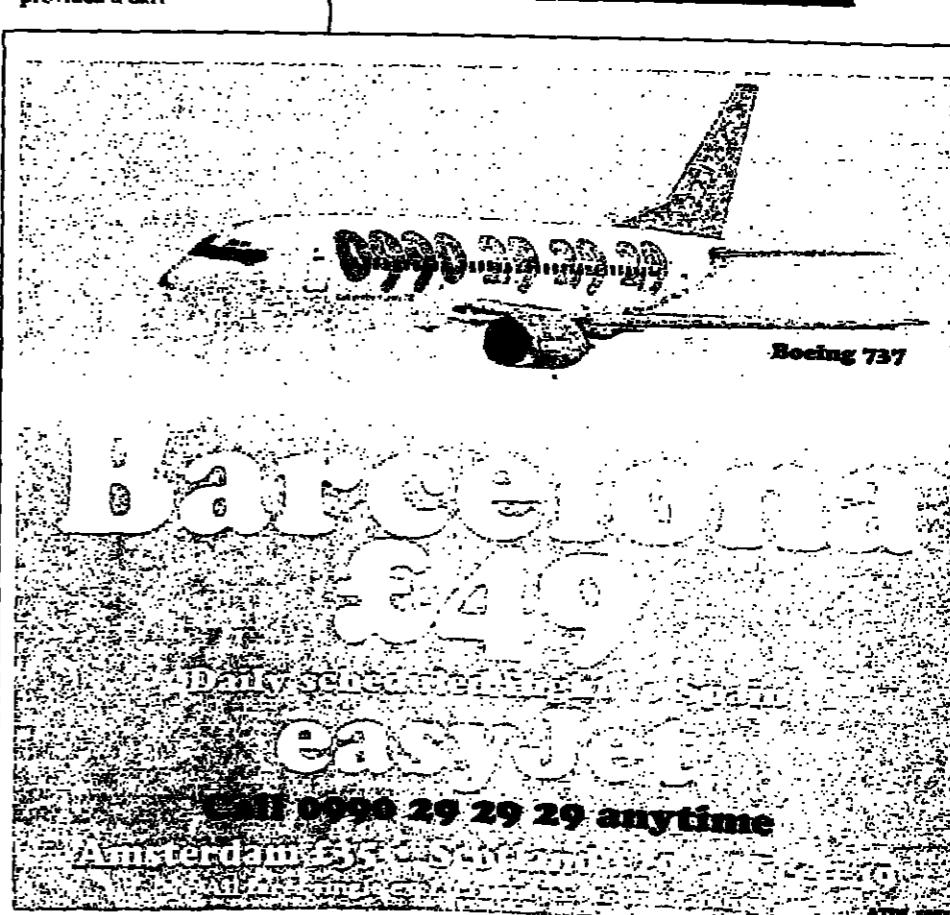
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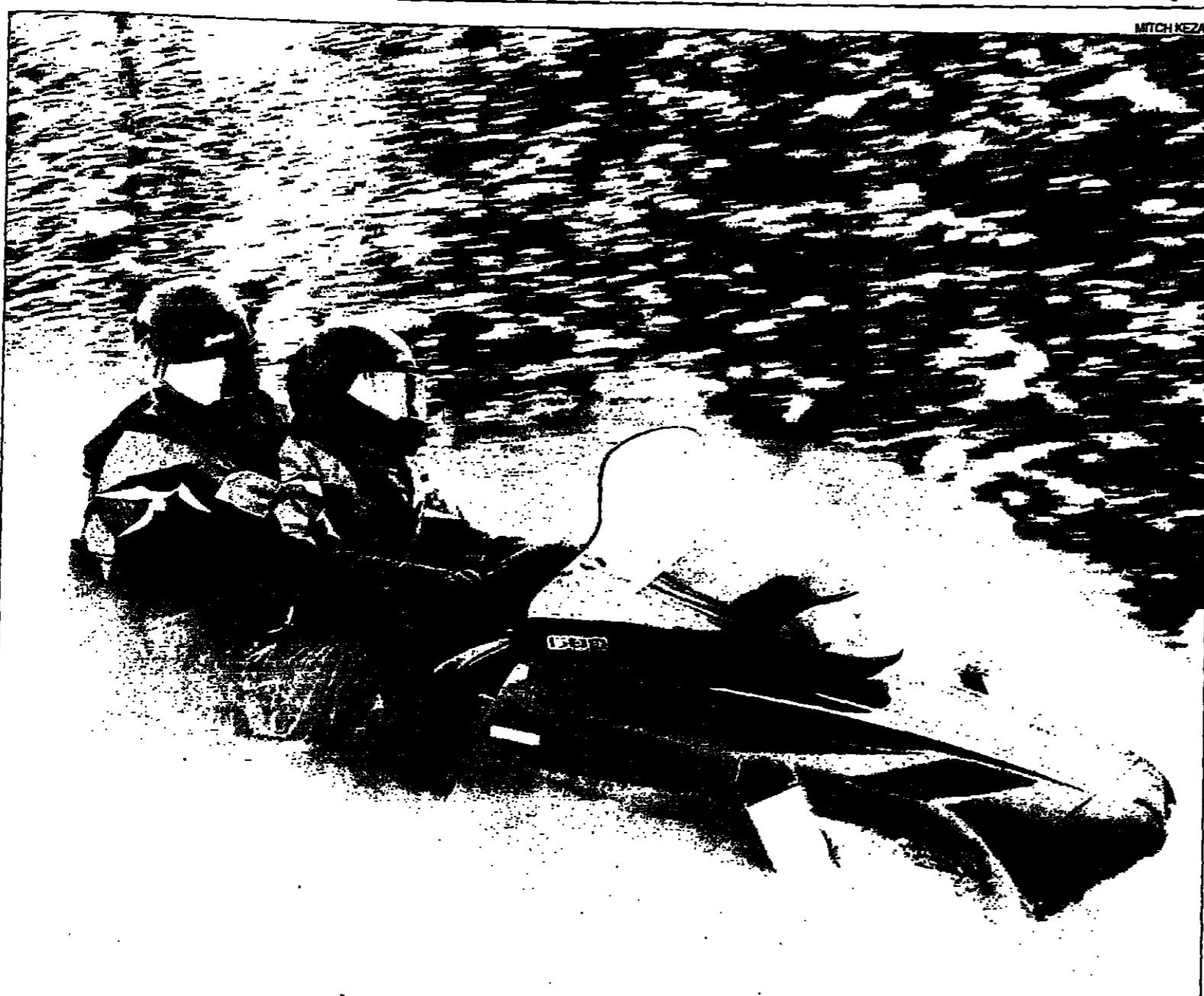
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Snowmobiling, although banned from Canada's national parks as a noisy and antisocial pastime, is nonetheless a truly exhilarating experience

Everything but the skis

In Calgary it was the coldest day of the winter — minus 40 something and the traffic belched white clouds of vapour into the freezing sun. As an old Canadian, I reassured my companions that it can sometimes, paradoxically, be much warmer up in the mountains than down on the prairie.

It can be but it wasn't. In Banff the locals were speculating when it had last been so cold — and when Canadians start apologising for the weather, you know it really must be something exceptional.

We had been invited to the Rockies to try alternatives to skiing. There are those, it seems, although I find it hard to believe, whose experiences have put them off skiing. Others may feel that at their time of life, it is too late to start learning. They want to experience the great outdoors but they want something safer and less demanding.

That first morning, the great outdoors seemed rather less appealing than the warmth and luxury of the Banff Springs Hotel. But the sun was brilliant, the skies cloudless and the air still and dry, and once we were wrapped in layers of warm clothing it was all quite exhilarating.

Of the various alternatives we could sample during the week, top of most people's list

FACT FILE

HISTORY: Banff is a pleasant small town about one-and-a-half hours' drive west of Calgary, which began life as a resort village for visitors to the hot-sulphur springs discovered during the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1883.

ACCOMMODATION: Both the imposing Banff Springs Hotel (£100 per room) and the Chateau Lake Louise (£155 per single/double), some 30 miles further west in its world-famous setting, are owned by Canadian Pacific Hotels (0171-389 1126; reservations 0500 303030). Like the separately owned Rimrock, across

the road from the hot spring pools, they are top of the range, but there is a wide selection of smaller and cheaper accommodation at both resorts.

FLIGHTS: This winter Air Canada (0990 247226) will operate daily flights to Calgary and Edmonton from £430 return; BA (0345 222111) flies direct to Calgary, fares £349 booked seven days in advance, return within a month.

FURTHER INFORMATION: From the Visit Canada Centre, 62-65 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DY (0891 715000).

or with heroic polar explorers trudging across the endless, implacable ice. Nowadays it is a popular sport in parts of North America, with kennels maintained like racing stables and big races attracting sponsorship and prizes.

We were simply passengers, huddled in the bottom of the sledges while our drivers, from Mountain Mushers, rode behind us shouting abuse and encouragement at their canine teams. A brisk half-hour trip was quite enough on this occasion, although in kinder weather a longer journey might appeal.

For our introduction to the curious sport of ice fishing we trudged out into the middle of a particularly beautiful lake, ringed by mountains, where a temporary hut had been erected and where our instructor Jeff Perodeau, produced a large drill with which he proceeded to bore a series of holes in the ice. Each allotted a hole, all we had to do was to bait the hook, drop the weighted line through the ice and gently reel it up and down. Between us we caught a couple of dozen trout.

After finally being allowed to ski on the last day at Lake Louise — several hours of intensive piste-bashing on superbly groomed slopes — we decided to forgo two further offers of skating and sleigh riding. But it had been a thoroughly enjoyable week.

Though they may lack the ambience of the Alps, the Canadian Rockies are majestically beautiful and, thanks to the relative weakness of the dollar, offer unbeatable value for money. At a mountain restaurant above Lake Louise, a splendidly varied self-service hot and cold buffet — as many helpings as you fancied — cost just \$12 (£6). Eat your heart out, Europe.

JOHN YOUNG

The author was a guest of the Canadian Tourist Office, Canadian Pacific Hotels and the Banff/Lake Louise Tourism Bureau



CANADA TIPS

FESTIVE SHOPPING: Where can you find every Christmas present you need? Across the Atlantic, of course. Bales Tours (01306 876867) suggests a Saturday-to-Wednesday spree in Toronto between now and December 14 for £385, including B&B at the Metropolitan Hotel. The city's Eaton Centre has 320 shops under one huge roof including Eaton's, Toronto's answer to Harrods.

Northwest Airlines (01424 224 400) claims that the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, with 400 shops under one roof and a seven-acre Camp Snoopy theme park with 21 rides is the greatest. Two adults sharing pay £319 each (or four sharing a jumbo-sized room with two queen-sized beds, £289 per person) for two nights' hotel accommodation and flights between Gatwick and Minneapolis St Paul. There are also departures from Glasgow (£354) and Belfast, Guernsey and Jersey (£399).

YUKON BREAK: A new Alaska B&B pass from Premier Holidays (01787 884031) allows travellers to stay in family homes in some of the most remote regions of Alaska

Where pleasure became a fine art

You don't go to Montreal for a quiet weekend. The year in North America's biggest French-speaking city is packed with an endless parade of fireworks, music, circus, motor racing and international film festivals.

In winter, the St Lawrence River fills with skaters along the old port and the area is turned over to a massive ice fiesta while the city's magnificent churches and public buildings stage recitals, comedy shows and exhibitions. Its streets and shopping arcades, forming a 29km long subterranean sanctuary from the freezing winter, glitter with Paris fashions, delicatessens and the coats of its still-thriving fur trade. And with over 5,000 bars and night clubs and an eclectic range of restaurants, Montreal is one of the last places to hide under the duvet with a good book and a mug of coffee.

The best way to get to know the place on a three-day trip is to head for Dorchester Square, a pleasant tree-lined piazza, where the main tourist information centre is located. Pick up *Old Montreal: A Walking Tour*.

The simple guide takes you on either a two-hour or three-and-a-half-hour stroll through the historic areas of a city founded on the St Lawrence River in 1664 by French colonists.

The old port, once a decaying riverfront, was transformed during the 1970s into Montreal's cultural centre. Along networks of cobble streets lined with street entertainers, the visitor can pop into quiet galleries and curio shops or relax in the sunshine at a noisy open-air cafe sniffing the Gauloises and sipping a beer.

The amble takes you past the delightful Notre-Dame Bonsecours Chapel at 40 Rue Saint-Paul east. The sailor's chapel, built in 1711, has model ships donated by rescued seamen hanging from the nave. From the smaller chapel, reached by steep spiral stairs, you can

FACT FILE

CRYSTAL CITIES (0181-390 9900) offers weekend breaks, including two nights at the four-star Queen Elizabeth Hotel, from £265 per person.

QUEBEC TOURISM: 0171-930 9742. **READING:** New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English by Margaret Atwood (OUP, £15, ISBN 0 19541 025 4). *In the Skin of a Lion* by Michael Ondrasik (Pan, £5.99, ISBN 0 33030 183 7). *Canada the Rough Guide* (£10.99, ISBN 1 85223 130 X). *Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies* (Rocky Mountain Books, £8.95, ISBN 0 92110 213 5).

see across the St Lawrence to the city, built on an island in the centre of the river.

Other musts on the walk include the magnificent Notre Dame Basilica at 110 Rue Notre-Dame west, once North America's largest religious building, whose blue-veined marble dappled with gold stars might have been designed by Patrick Moore.

Pointe-A-Callière, Montreal's Museum of Archaeology and History is also along the dock area. The museum, built on the exact site where old Montreal was founded and completed with original 17th-century ruins, sports a multimedia show and virtual reality presentation to bring alive the city's past.

The city — a financial and cultural centre — is also a vast open-air gallery. Any new building or redevelopment is required by law to put aside a percentage of the cost to works of art so every bank and office sports a sculpture or carving.

Montreal is relatively compact and has a good underground system along Paris Metro lines. Lured by the brochures, I took a 15-minute

trip from the centre to the former Olympic village where a huge area has been transformed into the world's second-largest botanical gardens after Kew.

The gardens have drawn on designs from 30 countries and can be reached on foot or on a shuttle that meanders past flower beds, ponds and Japanese gardens complete with waterfalls, lakes, little bridges and a daily tea ceremony. Visitors are sitting in the sun, sipping wine, and eating packed sushi lunches while oriental drummers beat out ancient rhythms.

Eating out in Montreal is bewildering so I cheated and turned to *The Gazette*, Montreal's English newspaper, where there was a daily restaurant review.

The Ferreira Trattoria, a Portuguese eatery, at 1446 Peel Street, was given the thumbs up so I tried its giant seafood stew with coriander, garlic and wine in a clay pot. Its price is average for a smartish Montreal restaurant, about £35 for two, but that's without wine or service charge — and wine can be expensive.

Those seeking a more humble but not less adventurous meal might prefer Dunn's, a Jewish diner in the downtown shopping area, which is open 24 hours. Dunn's, and its nearby rival Ben's, are an abiding childhood memory of Lily, my Quebecois sister-in-law. The staff at Dunn's serve giant, smoked-meat sandwiches and cheesecakes so rich that they are known locally as "heart attacks". A meal costs just £4.50.

Along Crescent Street there are some of the best bars and nightspots in Montreal. The Sir Winston Churchill Pub, like many in the area, has a happy hour. Locals spill on to the terraces for conversation late into the night.

NICK NUTTALL
• The author was a guest of Crystal Cities

TONY STONE



Montreal, as well as being a financial and cultural centre, is also an open-air gallery

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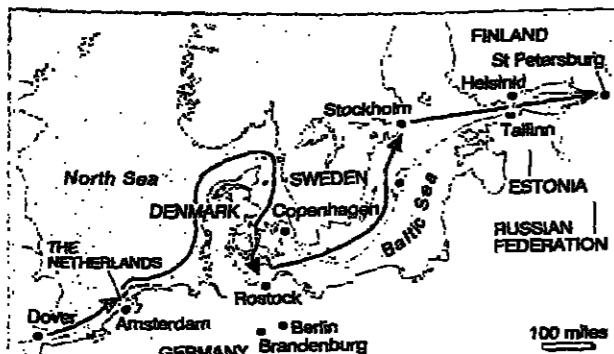
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JILL CRAWSHAW

Cruising: From ship to shore, a trip on the *Royal Viking Sun* was a surprising and unparalleled delight

Please captain, can I have some more?



The *Royal Viking Sun* is the ship which struck a reef in Egypt last spring. Judging by the way I was treated on one of the first cruises since being repaired, they seem to be doing everything possible to assure you it won't happen again.

I thought it was going to be like getting on an aeroplane, with all the hassle, discomfort and sweat involved in queuing to get your tickets processed — and lifting those cases on to the scale. Nothing like it. But we were welcomed into the almost empty terminal, complete with chandeliers, gilded staircase and smooth-as-silk lifts, and moments later we were already aboard. "Care for afternoon tea, sir? We're serving it with finger sandwiches, in the Norway lounge," said an attentive attendant.

And so it began — a trip of 14 days, visiting seven countries, seemingly without moving. Such a cruise is like staying at a top luxury hotel where everything is done for you — including the travelling. Who wants the bother of getting on and off trains and aeroplanes, if you can stay in a hotel that takes you from place to place while you sleep?

This was my first cruise and I had to learn about the philosophy of being afloat. The passenger may always be right, but you have to trust them, the crew that is, to be right, too.

I have stayed in some of the finest hotels in the world and have always met someone with some complaint — because, I suspect, if you pay the sort of money charged for a room at, say, the Beau Rivage (my favourite land-based watering hole) in Lausanne, you're entitled to find something wrong. At the end of this cruise, we were all handed evaluation questionnaires. Comparing notes with others on board, few of us found very much to complain about, apart from a missing good-night chocolate or a bathrobe which took a bit longer to turn up than one might have hoped.

Actually, they don't allow

pany pays and if you didn't take insurance, you deserve the heart attack).

Perhaps the most interesting feature of cruising is the type of people — well-heeled, of course, middle-aged to older, natch, and mostly American (more than 400 of them out of the 600 or so on board). Well, what did you expect? You immediately recognise the new cruisers. They are the folks with ruddy complexions and large stomachs but otherwise in rude health.

Regulars are the pasty ones with what Julius Caesar would have called the lean and hungry look. They are bound to be — because they have gone through a starvation regime in preparation for the two-week binge they know is coming.

In fact, you could use the whole time doing nothing but eating — without spending a penny more than the not-too-small fortune a cruise actually costs. Try this sort of regimen for size and see if you could survive it.

Twenty-four hour cabin service, which means that if you can't get to sleep at dawn, there's absolutely no reason why you don't order a three-course meal to send you off at 4am. Breakfast

from 6.30 to 9am in the dining room (cereals, fry-ups, waffles, scrambled eggs, pancakes, juices, smoked haddock, kippers — take your choice, or order the lot) but you can always ask cabin service to send a smoked salmon snack if you can't wait to get to your table (you could also take it with you when you go ashore for a little walk). And after you leave the main restaurant, the Garden Room on the eleventh floor (sorry, deck) would be happy to fit you up with a small buffet.

At that point, it would be advisable to take a walk around deck (four laps to the mile) which is good enough reason to feel entitled to sample the late riser's breakfast (more snacks, juices, rolls) in the Midnight Sun Lounge. That should keep you occupied until lunch, unless, in the meantime, you want a hot dog or hamburger from the swimming pool snack bar — a useful place, since it is only a couple of steps back to the Garden Room for the next buffet.

Nobody would then object to you having a "real" lunch in the dining room, with something like 26 different dishes to choose from — if you don't fancy the whole lot, that is.

Lunch finishes, unfortunately, at 2.30pm, which, unfortunately, means waiting an hour and half before afternoon tea — although the bar could fit you up with a snack if you haven't the energy to crawl to your cabin and sit on your own private veranda, watching the waves go by. (My wife was worried about being seasick, but did not need the pills she brought. Stabilisers work.)

Afternoon tea, with enough pastries to guarantee a place in the intensive-care wing, is a nice, leisurely way of preparing for dinner soon after seven — with a choice of a mere 14 courses. Time for another walk round deck, which means you can then settle down for a drink and

some nuts while you watch the evening show, which finishes in time to dance afterwards or go to one of the bars or perhaps the library or the "gentleman's club" for a snifter in readiness for the late-night buffet.

The excursions prove useful because you have to get out and walk. Ours was not a typical cruise. On some, you can be in mid-ocean for days on end. We only had four days at sea, spread throughout the cruise. Usually, we sailed at night or in mid-afternoon. So on this cruise, there was time in Berlin to drive up the Unter den Linden and promenade around the Brandenburg Gate before taking off for the Olympic Stadium, and, later in the first week, to see just how beautiful Stockholm can be in summer.

And so it went on — for all the 14 days, the best attention, the fullest consideration. Tips are taken care of by the company, unless you feel you want to give something extra. I don't think I ever felt happier handing over the envelopes with a few words of gratitude and a selection of dollars to the waiters and cabin stewards.

Without doubt, this was the finest hotel I have ever stayed in. And you know, when I walked round the swimming pool, I could swear the place was moving. But, then it could have been something I ate.

MICHAEL
FREEDLAND

• The author was on the *Royal Viking Sun* as a guest of Cunard.

WORLD WATCHING

Answers from page 25
DEMOPHOBE

(b) A person who has a morbid fear of crowds and massed humanity. The condition of most of us during the Christmas shopping festival, or when exposed to some hyperbole of shopping-and-shoving such as Brent Cross. If all the people who suffer from it were put together in one place, they would not like it one little bit.

RUPTUARY
(e) A commoner or plebeian. A rare rhyme for voluntary. "So glad you have gone into the estate agent racket now, Tanya. It always seemed to me you were suited for ruptuary work."

BATOLOGY
(b) The constant repetition of the same words or phrases in speech or writing. A batologist is one who writes on it. It is the exact description of television commercials, sales chat by sellers of Volvos and encyclopedias, and homilies by spouses.

GREGORY-POWDERS
(a) A laxative powder containing rhubarb, magnesium and ginger, invented by a Scottish doctor named Gregory, who died in 1822. "Mmmmm," you murmur appreciatively as you try the herbal powder your hostess has just sprinkled on your Gnocchi Fondadori. "It's not unlike Gregory Powder, isn't it?"



The Nevsy cathedral in Tallinn, Estonia is one of the magnificent places to visit on a cruise on the *Royal Viking Sun*. The ship spends more time in port than at sea

SUN SAILING FILE

■ CRUISES: The *Royal Viking Sun* has cruises throughout the year. The Jewels of the Baltic Cruise in July 1996 cost between £3,475 per person for an inside cabin and £13,250 per person in the owner's suite (14 nights on board). The 1997 world cruise is sold out. Bookings from travel agents or Cunard Line Ltd, Southampton, 01703 716500.

■ FACILITIES: The ship is registered in the Bahamas. Language on board is English and the dollar will buy anything. They also take banknotes, travellers' cheques, credit cards and local currencies.

■ DRESS: On the two-week cruise dress was formal on four evenings (evening dress or dark suits). Requirements for the other nights are equally divided between informal (suits or sports jackets for men, dresses or trouser suits for women) and casual.

■ BOOKS TO READ: *The Czar's Madman* by Jaan Kross (Harvill, £8.99, ISBN 0 00271 201 6). *Scandinavia and Baltic Europe on a Shoestring* (Lonely Planet, £10.95, ISBN 0 86442 251 2). *Insight Guide Baltic States* (£13.99, ISBN 9 62421 182 5).

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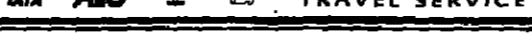
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France: Mayhem in the hotel and restaurant trade as prices rise

Too much room at the inn

The French hotel and restaurant industry is in dire straits because tourists, particularly the British, can no longer afford French prices. RICHARD BINNS, the author of *French Leave Finesse*, blames the arrogance of chefs, an overvalued franc and the country's politicians for selling the French soul to Europe.

Almost two years ago to the day I warned in *The Times* that the French Government's *franc-fort* policy had caused mayhem in the country's hotel and restaurant industry. Now, after numerous trips to France compiling *French Leave Finesse*, I find the country in a deeply unhappy, soul-searching mood. The air of depression in *La belle France* is overwhelming; and, today, the hotel and restaurant industry (the country's largest, in terms of income and employees and its largest foreign currency earner) is in dire straits.

Since 1980 I have talked and listened to hundreds of chefs, restaurateurs and hoteliers throughout France. In the last year or so many have gone bust — including, for the first time since the accolade was created in 1931, two Michelin three-star chefs: for the remaining vast majority, profits are zero and survival has become a precarious business. The industry is in crisis. Without exception they all work like Trojans; to see them brought to their knees, through no fault of their own, fills me with the deepest gloom. Who is to blame? A two-word answer suffices: the politicians. A new president, Chirac, and a new prime minister, Juppé — both as hell-bent as their predecessors to be at the heart of the new European order with its single currency, social chapter and federal union — have brought no respite for the industry; indeed they have made matters worse.

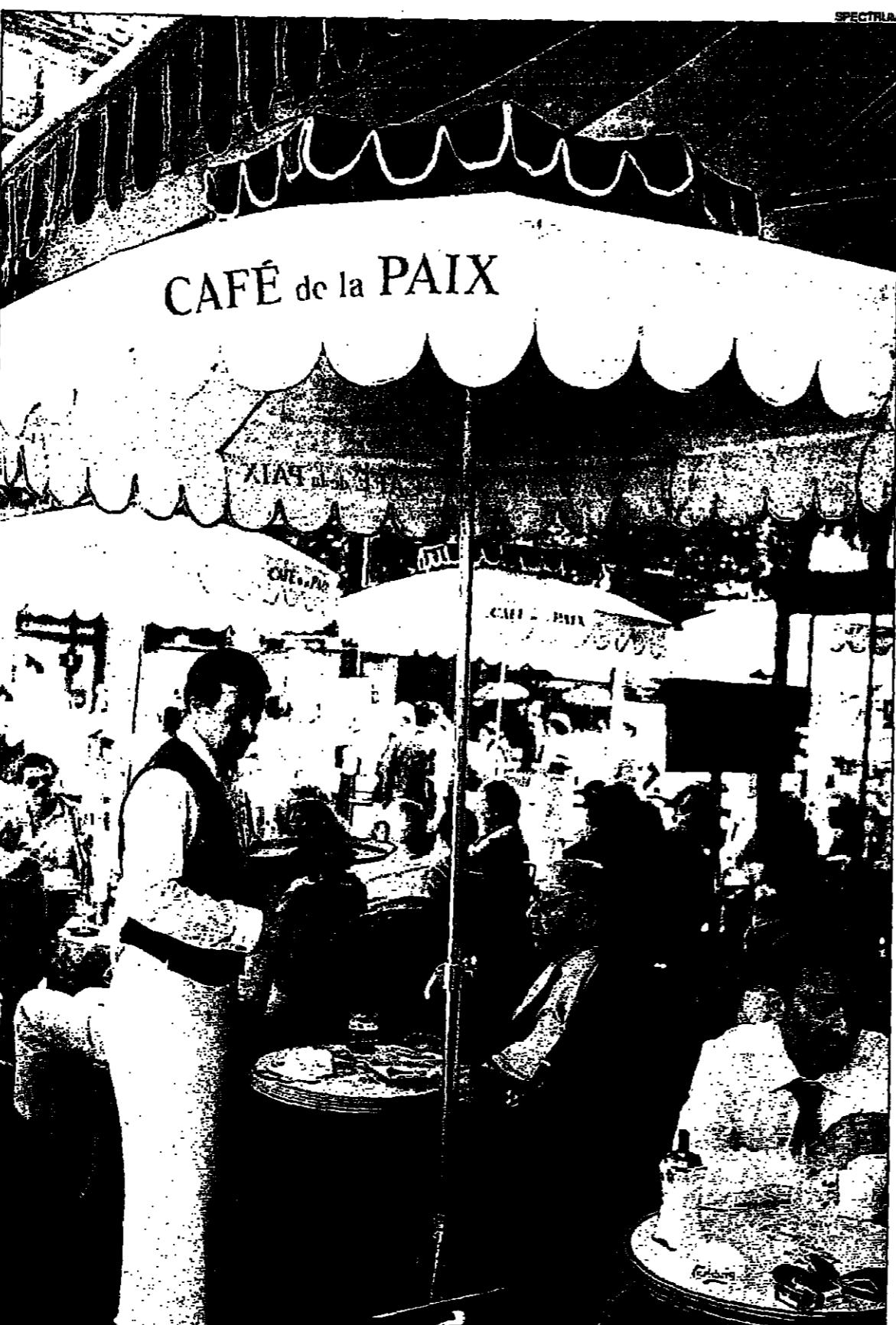
What are the reasons for the industry's predicament? The trio of excessive TVA (VAT) charges of 20.6 per cent; high minimum wages (more than £600 per month); and Mont-Blanc-sized employers' social security taxes (more than 40 per cent on top of gross wages).

Yet another reason stands out — that wretched *franc-fort* policy. The franc is grossly overvalued: no wonder unemployment is so high and that far fewer Britons, Americans, Italians and Spaniards visit France. The strong currency and both higher direct and indirect taxes mean fewer francs in the pockets of foreign tourists and French consumers.

Two weeks ago I carried out a telephone poll of 54 hotels in my new guide — 5 per cent of the entries. I asked the owners to estimate the percentage decrease in the number of Britons visiting their establishments this year — just one of the many worries they all face. The average fall was a catastrophic 38 per cent.

To make matters worse, not one French chef, hotelier and restaurateur I spoke to during 1995/96 wanted to be part of the EU and all were deeply worried about the bleak future facing their industry.

Eating out in provincial France is in many ways much less enjoyable than the British equivalents: eclectic repertoires and a far greater variety are the big pluses here. Most French chefs are stuck in classical cooking trammels; culinary styles from other parts of Europe and the globe have made almost zero impact on French cuisine. The words "eclectic", "cosmopolitan" and "liberation" mean little to most chefs. The real cause of this culinary constipation in France is the attitude of the French themselves. Their arrogance and insularity, in many things, is staggering. Talk to chefs, talk to restaurateurs, talk to sommeliers — those who



French restaurant owners report a huge fall in bookings and even Michelin-starred chefs have had difficulties

have travelled abroad will tell you what an impossible task they face in persuading their French clients to try foreign wines or dishes.

The pain facing my friends across the Channel will soon become even more acute when, next year, even fewer Britons holiday in France. Make no mistake, Le Shuttle and the P & O Stena ferry operation will be increasing their prices: they must do to survive. Only one positive action will start French tills ringing again: if France pulled out of the ERM and devalued. There's no chance of Chirac and Juppé introducing such policies so, perhaps, the markets will do it for them — just as they did here in September 1992.

The problem besetting France's hotel and restaurant industry should be a salutary lesson for us all. Do we really want to be part of the EU? Or am I right in thinking that "our Ken" has, at last, begun to see the light?

I suggest that Kenneth Clarke is made French Finance Minister for five minutes and is challenged to

introduce five one-a-minute policy changes to breathe instant life into the dead-on-its-feet French hotel and restaurant trade. Blustering generalisations, Clarke trademarks, would not be tolerated — just five certain-to-work policy changes.

If the challenge is too taxing for Mr Clarke then I would be happy to propose five changes which I have been putting to numerous French hoteliers, restaurateurs and chefs during the past two years. All agreed that these measures would work and would welcome them with open arms. My changes would be:

■ Withdrawal from the ERM.
■ Devaluation of the franc by 10-15 per cent.

■ Cutting savagely French employers' social security taxes on gross wages from 40.50 per cent to 10 per cent or less.

■ Cancel all minimum wage legislation.

■ Decrease TVA (VAT) from 20.6 per cent to 17.5 per cent.

French restaurateurs and hoteliers

only survive now by employing fewer staff and by taking more and more short cuts. Standards of service are lower than ever before. The five changes above are already in place in the UK: that's why British industry is prospering; and why unemployment is so much lower here. They would also rejuvenate the French catering and hotel industry (and all French industry); the irony is that this would mean instant death for a single currency, the social chapter and federal union. Finally, in view of all the earlier invalidating evidence, why does Mr Clarke persist in his delusion that our best interests are linked to a single currency and a European Union?

● *French Leave Finesse* (Chiltern House, £9.99) by Richard Binns is a 416-page guide with 1,065 hotel and restaurant recommendations. It is available direct from him at 4 Waterside, The Moors, Myton Road, Leamington Spa CV31 3QA: no charge for postage.

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JILL CRAWSHAW'S TRAVEL TIPS

Flower power

FOUR tours have been added to Cox & King's (0171-873 5000) 18-strong 1997 Botany and Wildflower collection: the High Pyrenees and Ordesa National Park are the centres for its 15-day tour in July based at Formigal, which costs £1,295 fully inclusive.

On an 11-day visit to the two-star Hotel Panorama Beach in Puerto Pollensa, a week's half-board in early April will

cost £199 per adult, £99 for each child; in July £399 and £255 respectively.

Denver's Botanic Gardens, the new Hudson Gardens and wildflowers of the alpine tundra and Aspen woodlands are the lure on a 16-day American Colorado Rockies tour (£1,980 half-board) based on the old silver mining town of Breckenridge.

Between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and the North and South American continents, Costa Rica's variety of habitats provide rich pastures for flora and fauna enthusiasts to enjoy on a 16-day November (1997) tour (£2,100 half-board). All tours, which include flights, are led by botanical experts.

Turkish time

IT IS hard to believe that with the Turkish coast's popularity there is still somewhere that offers "complete escapism". Yet that is what Simply Turkey (0181-747 1011) promises on Sovalye Island, in the 1930s a retreat for Fethiye's wealthy. A two-week apartment holiday costs from £352, including not only flights but use of a motor launch with boatman for trips to the mainland.

For those wanting to join

in the life of a tiny but hospitable Turkish village,

two weeks in a traditional-style stone villa at Uzumlu

costs from £471 with flights and car hire.

A week's "Hidden Turkey" tour in June that helps to give visitors an insight into Turkish custom, follows old caravan trails,

studies kilim designs and attends greased wrestling matches.

The tour costs £675 half-board.

Ship shape

THE 1997 Hong Kong Rugby Sevens between March 21 and 23, upgraded to the World Cup Sevens, will be the last before the Chinese takeover. David Dryer Sports Tours (0171-831 7799) has a four-night package to Hong Kong departing March 19, with flights and first class accommodation plus match tickets from £1,500.

Sea food

CRUISE food is usually memorable for quantity rather than quality, but next year it should be something special on the Silversea Cruises (0171-739 4029) series of culinary voyages in conjunction with the Cordon Bleu Academy, which focus on cookery demos, wine, and table presentations.

On a two-week spice-oriented cruise, the "Essence of the East" from Mombasa to Singapore starting this December, French perfumer Alain Voisot will lecture on famous scents and passengers can sample them. Prices from £3,222.

Correction

THE photograph used to illustrate our article on the grand tour of Italy last week was not of Amalfi, as described on the slide delivered to *The Times*, but of Positano. We regret that the error occurred.

• Kate Muir is ill. Insider's Guide to Paris will return next week.

Bigger fish

ANGLIA Travel (01263 761602) is offering weekend courses on Izaak Walton's favourite Derbyshire river, the Dove, with John Bailey, angling expert and tele-

presentations.

On a two-week spice-oriented cruise, the "Essence of the East" from Mombasa to Singapore starting this December, French perfumer Alain Voisot will lecture on famous scents and passengers can sample them. Prices from £3,222.

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CHESS

by Raymond Keene

I AM OFTEN asked what is the best way to start playing correspondence chess. Correspondence chess now has its own magazine, *Chess Mail*, and its latest issue claims that with fax or e-mail play, the duration of a game by post that might previously have lasted up to five years, can now be cut by a factor of four or five. This week's game is by Jonathan Penrose, ten times British over-the-board champion and now number two on the world correspondence ranking list.

White: Jonathan Penrose; **Black:** Richard Goldenberg
13th Correspondence World Ch.
1988-91
Scandinavian Defence

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6
3 d4 Nbd5 4 Nf3 Nf5
5 c4 Nb6 6 Be2 Nf5
7 b3 e5 8 Nc3 Be7
9 a3 e4d5 10 cxd5 Nb4

11 Qd4 Bxd3 12 Nc5 Nf6

13 Bf5 Nc6 14 Nf3 Nf5

15 Nc5 Nf5 16 Bg5 Nc6

17 Bxg5 Nc5 18 Nf3 Nf5

19 Qd5 Nc6 20 Nf3 Nf5

21 Rad1 Nf5 22 Rad1 Nf5

23 Bxa4 Nc6 24 c4 Nf5

25 Nf3 Nf5 26 Nf3 Nf5

27 Rad1 Nf5 28 Rad1 Nf5

29 Rad1 Nf5 30 Rad1 Nf5

31 Rad1 Nf5 32 Rad1 Nf5

33 Rad1 Nf5 34 Kd7 Nf5

35 Kd7 Nf5 36 Kd7 Nf5

37 Kd7 Nf5 38 Rad1 Nf5

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UN steps up peace hunt as Afghan foes haggle over power

FROM CHRISTOPHER THOMAS IN KABUL

THE United Nations is attempting to broker a peace accord in Afghanistan between General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the powerful ruler of six stable northern provinces, and the Taliban Islamic army, which controls three-quarters of the country. The aim is to save Kabul, the capital, from attack.

The military stalemate north of Kabul has given UN envoys time to try to bring both sides together. Pakistan is also involved in the drive for peace. Nasirullah Babar, the Home Minister, has travelled to all the main Afghan cities this week to try to save Kabul from another battering.

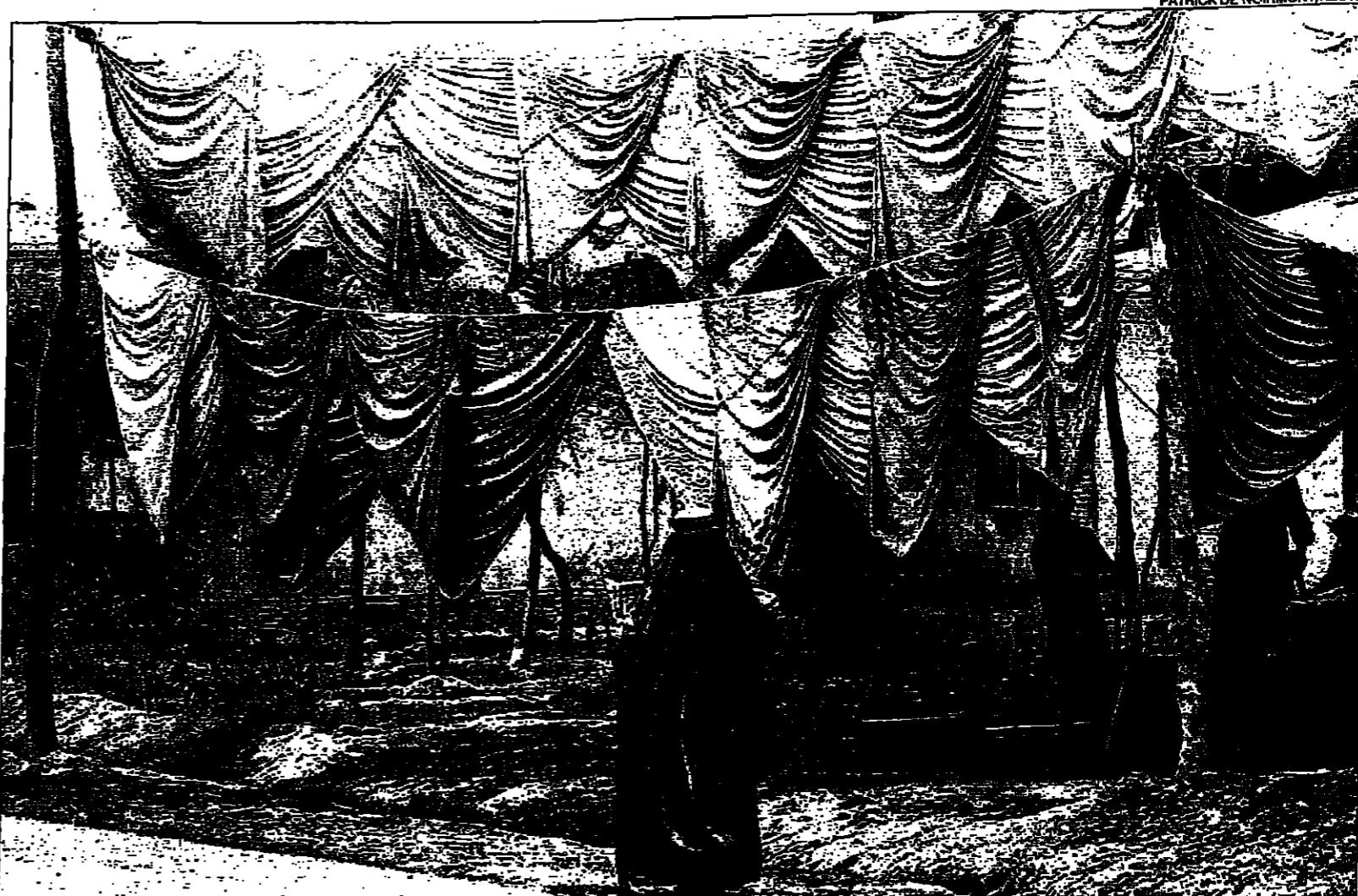
He met Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Taliban chief, in the southern city of Kandahar — a rare encounter for a non-Afghan. Mullah Omar is so ultra-conservative he receives only Muslim envoys. Non-Muslim UN officials have failed to gain access.

Troops loyal to General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord, came under heavy fire from Taliban mortars yesterday, a day after joining forces with Ahmad Shah Masood, the former Defence Minister, north of Kabul. An Uzbek officer said the two forces would join in an offensive later in the day. (Reuters)

General Dostum is the key to peace. He has privately made it clear he expects to play a role in any future government to protect his fiefdom. His sabre-rattling with tanks and artillery, positioned 40 miles north of Kabul, is designed to persuade Taliban.

He is ready to share a role in government with both Taliban and General Ahmed Shah Masood, the Tajik leader who was defence chief in the former Kabul administration.

A Russian draft resolution at the UN Security Council calling for an immediate end to hostilities is supported by the Central Asian countries. They look to General Dostum as a barrier against Taliban's hardline ideology. Both they and Russia will, therefore, seek to ensure that he is involved in any future government in Kabul.

An Afghan woman veiled from head to toe in a *burqa* passes a shop selling them in Kabul. Taliban insist women must wear the garment

THE TIMES

Kabul traffic cops under-employed in city of disruption

BY CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

THREE weeks after the Taliban Islamic militia seized control of Kabul, there is chaos in the Afghan capital.

There are no functioning primary schools, the university has closed indefinitely, hospitals are disrupted, international aid programmes are winding down and there is greater hunger. But Taliban has restored one symbol of normality: traffic police.

Not that there is much traffic, save for ancient buses and bone-shaking yellow taxis, most of them Russian relics as well as Toyota pickups roaring around town laden with turbaned Talebs with Kalashnikovs and shoulder-held rocket launchers — part of the Taliban uniform.

In the Russian-built Foreign Ministry three painters are touching up the stairway, a bizarre gesture amid the sea of rubble that is Kabul. The peak-capped traffic police, waving little lollipops at the speeding Talebs — the "go" side, of course — are equally as cosmetic and pointless.

One of the early diktats of Taliban was to impose a fixed price on meat, set at about half the market rate. This was abandoned after every butcher in Kabul ran out of mutton and the price was so low shepherds refused to slaughter

their sheep. Some good things have flowed from Taliban's invasion: the shelling has stopped; ample and cheap supplies of vegetables and other goods are arriving by lorry from Pakistan; there is no looting and the new rulers have forced down the price of bread.

There is not much else for the people of Kabul to be happy about. The schools closed, because all the teachers were women. The university was shut because it was co-educational — forbidden under Taliban law. Its teachers, too, were mostly women.

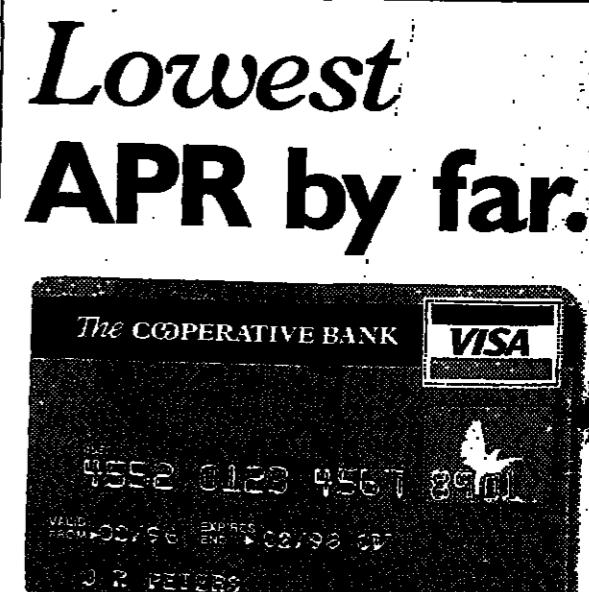
The hospitals have been disrupted because many nurses and some women doctors are staying away, despite an exemption by Taliban allowing them to work. They fear going on the streets, which are off-limits to women unless they are shopping or can prove they are medical staff.

Nurses in the city's two hospitals work lengthy five-day shift cycles without going home, thus minimising the time spent travelling to and from work. There are elaborate restrictions on male doctors treating women patients, and women doctors are not allowed to go near a male patient.

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Tasmania plant is 'oldest in the world'

FROM ROGER MAYNARD
IN SYDNEY

WHAT could be the world's oldest living plant has been discovered in Tasmania, scientists said yesterday. The shrub, dubbed King's Holly but officially named *Lomatia tasmanica*, may be up to 40,000 years old.

It stands up to 26ft high and stretches almost a mile down two river gullies in Tasmania's southern wilderness area.

The plant was found by botanists three years ago. The shrub was dated using a fossil found in one of the rainforest gullies. Stephen Harris, of the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, said: "A fossil of an identical specimen has been found near the site in old gravels and that's been dated as more than 40,000 years old."

Previously the oldest plant was believed to be a creosote plant clone in California, estimated to be 11,700 years old.

Paris and Bonn in plan to scrap veto on EU integration

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

BRITAIN would lose its power to veto a future European defence force or other steps to closer integration under a scheme for a new flexible European Union, launched yesterday by France and Germany.

The Franco-German plan is an attempt by the two states at the heart of the EU to devise a way of bypassing objections from reluctant member states and launching common actions in all fields covered by the European Union, from economic affairs to immigration, police work and defence.

The scheme would in particular lend itself to the creation of a European foreign policy and defence system, the two Governments say. A common defence policy involving willing states could be created within the frame of the Western European Union, it says.

Britain is resisting continental efforts to bring the WEU, the European pillar of the Nato alliance, under the aus-

pes of the European Union. The creation of new machinery for "accelerated integration" has emerged as a top priority at the current negotiations for revising the Maastricht treaty.

Britain supports the concept of a more flexible Europe, which most states agree will be especially necessary once the countries of the former Communist bloc join the Union early in the next century.

But London is suspicious of anything that smacks of an attempt to create a "hardcore" Europe along lines suggested two years ago by federal-minded German politicians.

The German Foreign Ministry insisted yesterday: "We do not want a hardcore Europe." However, the Franco-German plan is certain to raise such a prospect, given its insistence that "no member state can have the power of veto" over the desire of a group of states to band together over

any policy. The Government is committed to resisting any erosion of existing powers of veto in EU affairs.

The plan, drafted by Klaus Kinkel and Hervé de Charette, the Foreign Ministers, notes that Europe already operates a variable-speed arrangement. Britain's potential opt-out from monetary union is an example.

The ministers call for a broad clause of "reinforced cooperation" in the new-look Maastricht treaty which would enable groups of states to "move ahead".

A condition would be that this would not undermine the rights of non-participating states, the document says. The European Court of Justice would exercise authority over the scheme. Only a qualified majority of states would be needed to start common initiatives, but states participating in a more co-ordinated policy would have to take decisions unanimously.

Hurricane cuts Cuba air links

FROM DAVID ADAMS IN MIAMI

BRINGING 90 mph winds, Hurricane Lili tore through Cuba yesterday, crossing the southern coast and dumping several inches of rain on the provinces of Havana and Matanzas.

Havana international airport was closed until further notice, while the state electricity company cut power to most parts of the capital to minimise damage, and thousands of residents in low-lying coastal districts were evacuated from their homes.

A cold front moving south through the southern United States seemed likely to push Lili away from the Florida coast, posing a greater risk to the islands of the Bahamas.

Esteban Lazo, the secretary of Havana's Communist Party, said about 75,000 people had been evacuated from vulnerable homes in a poor state of repair in Havana. Some

residents were offered shelter in a makeshift dormitory set up in the Council of State, President Castro's office in Revolution Square.

Havana appeared to have been spared the worst of the winds, as the hurricane passed over one of the least populated parts of the country, missing the other cities of Cienfuegos and Matanzas, as well as the tourist peninsula of Varadero.

However, the storm, which is the seventh hurricane this year, is almost certain to be a blow to Cuba's agricultural heartland, just as it slowly emerges from the economic crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, once its main trading partner and donor of financial aid.

Most at risk are Cuba's sugarcane and tobacco crops, two of its chief export and hard-currency earners.

Artful ruse at the Prado

Madrid: The authorities at the Prado Museum were told yesterday of a security lapse after it was discovered that a modern painting had been smuggled into the museum and hung between two Rembrandts (Tunku Varadarajan writes).

The painting, depicting a

skull against a dark background, was noticed by two tourists on a visit to the museum, who then alerted the curators. The painting had been hanging unnoticed for about five days, the museum said, although a source said it could have been there for weeks, or even months.

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Belgian King calls for moral revival

FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS
IN BRUSSELS

IN A surprise appeal, King Albert II of the Belgians yesterday called for "a profound change in our country" after numerous errors in a paedophile investigation created public outrage.

The monarch spoke amid nationwide protests as tens of thousands of Belgians from all walks of life marched for a fifth consecutive day, demanding a clean-up of a justice system seen as inept and corrupt.

King Albert met the parents of missing children after the dismissal of the chief investigator into the child pornography ring that has left at least four girls dead and half a dozen more children missing. "We are convinced that this tragedy must now be the opportunity for moral revival and profound change," the King said.

Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Prime Minister, said the dismissal of the investigating magistrate had sparked "an overall loss of confidence" in how Belgium is governed.

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Dole goes for broke with tax gamble in Reagan country

FROM BROWEN MADDOX
IN RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

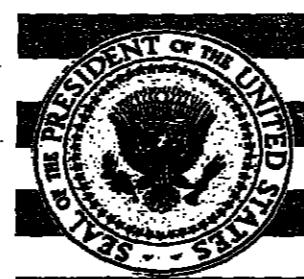
BOB DOLE, the Republican challenger for the US presidency, will gamble his dwindling campaign resources on the battle for California, the richest electoral prize of all the states, and the birthplace of the Republican revolution under Ronald Reagan.

Just 17 days before the election, he has decided to pour up to \$7 million (£4.5 million) into California, and is said to have bought \$500,000 of television advertising in Los Angeles alone in the past 48 hours. He, his wife Elizabeth, and running-mate Jack Kemp will maintain between them a constant presence in the state until polling day.

"President Clinton is taking California for granted, just because he has Hollywood on his side", Mr Dole told a gathering in Riverside, southern California on Thursday. "But the heart of California is still Reagan country."

California, with 54 electoral college votes, a fifth of the total needed to win, is as large and complex as a nation in its own right. The north, around San Francisco, is traditionally Democratic and liberal but the inland region of the south, a mixture of suburban sprawl and scrubby desert, has long been a Republican stronghold.

Mr Reagan, who called the south the place where "good Republicans come home to die", used it to launch the tax-cutting philosophy that defined his presidency. Mr Dole



hopes that his platform of tax cuts, higher defence spending and curbs on immigration will have similar appeal.

After weeks of agonising, Mr Dole's decision to "bet the ranch" on California, jeopardising his chances in other marginal states such as New Jersey, was prompted by opinion polls showing that Mr Clinton's lead in the state is narrowing. Last week the respected Field poll suggested that it had halved to 10 points.

On Wednesday, a poll by the *San Francisco Examiner* found a four-point drop in Mr Clinton's lead to 12 points.

But the gap is still formidable and other polls which show Mr Clinton ahead even in parts of southern California emphasise the challenge facing Mr Dole. In Riverside on Thursday, even his aides muttered that beating Mr Clinton might be "mission impossible". However, they point out that their endeavours may save Republican congressional seats and force Mr Clinton to spend time campaigning in a state he thought was secure.

Yesterday Clinton aides said they would step up spending in California in response but brushed off the new challenge. Leon Panetta, the White House Chief of Staff, said the Clinton campaign had not yet decided whether to concentrate on the presidential race, to get Mr Clinton the widest possible mandate, or to focus on marginal congressional races.

In the California battle, Mr Dole's best weapon is his promise of a 15 per cent tax cut and a "fairer, simpler tax system". To rousing cheers at a rally here, he announced that "we are going to end the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] as we know it".

In other echoes of Mr Reagan, he emphasised that states have more independence from "faraway potentates on the Potomac", and promised to resist defence cuts which have cost many Californian jobs.

Most divisively, and in sharp contrast to Mr Clinton, he threw his weight behind two contentious Californian schemes to curb benefits for illegal immigrants and help for minorities.

He also backed a proposition to block affirmative action for minorities.

In Riverside, at least, his message was received warmly. However, unless many others in California follow suit, the cradle of the Republican revolution will also be the place where it died.

Leading article, page 22



Bob Dole greets the rally at Riverside, where he took a tough line on immigration



Alemán jailed in 1980
Vengeful Mayor on course to beat Ortega

FROM DAVID ADAMS
IN MANAGUA

FOR Arnoldo Alemán, the burly former Mayor of troubled Managua, the Nicaraguan presidential election tomorrow is a chance to settle personal scores.

As head of the Liberal Party alliance that leads the polls, Señor Alemán hopes to defeat his old nemesis, Daniel Ortega, the former guerrilla comandante who headed the left-wing Sandinista Government in the 1980s.

Señor Alemán has plenty of reasons to detest the Sandinistas. They jailed him in 1980 for alleged counter-revolutionary activities. When his father died, his jailers refused to allow him to attend the funeral. In 1989, as his wife lay dying of stomach cancer, the Sandinistas placed him under house arrest and seized his coffee farm.

Should Señor Alemán win, analysts fear his anti-Sandinista anger and combative style could plunge the country back into the confrontation and violence that has dominated Nicaragua's recent history.

Although his land was returned, he has pledged to force the Sandinistas to hand back or pay compensation for other confiscated property, including the house of his campaign chief, now occupied by the Ortega family.

When the Sandinistas were voted out of office in a surprise election defeat in 1990, Señor Alemán became Mayor of Managua and took relish in removing hundreds of Sandinistas from the city payroll. He set about removing all traces of the Sandinista revolution, including painting over several social realist murals that adorned main streets.

Sandinista hatred of Señor Alemán runs deep. They liken him to the hated dictator, Anastasio Somoza. As Mayor, they say, he displayed a style of corrupt, autocratic rule.

Señor Alemán, 50, denies any links to Somoza. But his Liberal Party was once a tool of the Somoza regime. His father, a judge, was a Somoza appointee, and Señor Alemán himself was a leader of the Liberal Student Youth organisation, a pro-Somoza group, in the 1960s.



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Strategists turn their minds to fight for Congress

Republicans hope to clip Clinton coat-tails

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

AS BOB DOLE'S hopes of catching President Clinton fade, attention is switching to the other main contest on November 5: the battle for Congress.

The Democrats must gain three seats to recapture the Senate and 18 for the House. The tide is flowing in their direction, but record numbers of races are far too close to call and even Washington's most outspoken pundits hesitate to predict the outcome.

Mr Clinton's strategists were meeting yesterday to decide whether he should send the last 18 days pursuing a landslide victory by courting traditionally Republican states, or focus primarily on helping Democratic congressional candidates in states he may already have secured. Conversely, a reason Mr Dole has opted to fight on in California is not to abandon his party's congressional candidates there.

Who controls Congress will fundamentally affect the na-

ture of a second Clinton term. If the Republicans cling on, Mr Clinton would again be compelled to react to their agenda, although Newt Gingrich's chaste revolutionaries would almost certainly be more moderate.

If the Democrats regain control, Mr Clinton could return to the legislative activism of his first two years to leave his mark on America. George Will, a leading conservative columnist, argues that Republican candidates should now "advertise" Mr Dole's imminent defeat to help themselves.

The Senate is likely to remain Republican, but a dozen of the 34 Senate races could still go either way — a uniquely high number this late in the campaign. Democratic candidates have Senators Robert Smith of New Hampshire and Larry Pressler of South Dakota in trouble, and are challenging hard for Bob Dole's old Kansas seat where Sam Brownback, one of



Gingrich: unpopularity factor

Pressler: hitting big trouble

Weld: running neck and neck

Kerry: Boston Brahmins' battle

Helms: wily and ahead of foe

Mr Gingrich's young House revolutionaries, is the Republican candidate. They are running strongly in Colorado, Oregon, Maine and Wyoming, where Republican incumbents are retiring. They would love to defeat North Carolina's Jesse Helms, but the wily arch-conservative is

10 points ahead of his 1990 foe, Harvey Gantt. Republicans hope to win in three conservative Southern states — Alabama, Louisiana and Mr Clinton's home state of Arkansas — where veteran Democrats are retiring, and in Massachusetts where William Weld, the Governor, and John

Kerry, the Democrat incumbent, are neck and neck in the battle of the "Boston Brahmins". They have an outside chance of unseating Paul Wellstone, an unashamedly liberal first-term senator from Minnesota, and in New Jersey two congressmen, Bob Torr

celli and Dick Zimmer, are dead level in a remarkably dirty race to succeed Bill Bradley, a retiring Democrat.

The Democrats are most hopeful of winning the House, where all 435 seats are being contested. They are counting on Mr Clinton's coat-tails, polls showing Americans gen-

erally more likely to vote for Democrats, and Mr Gingrich's unpopularity.

The Democrats are targeting the 44 first-term Republicans who won with less than 55 per cent of the vote in 1994. Republicans hope to win most of the 19 conservative Southern districts where Democrats

are retiring. However, Mr Gingrich has reduced his odds on the Republicans' holding the House from 10-1 to 5-1 and history is against them. The last time they took the House, 1946 and 1952, it was for one term only.

Leading article, page 23

Senate hopefuls dig up dirt in the Garden State

FROM TOM RHODES IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

CONFIDENT of victory next month, President Clinton flies to New Jersey tomorrow to do battle for a crucial Senate seat the Democrats must hold to regain Congress.

The race between two congressmen, Dick Zimmer, a Republican, and Bob Torricelli, Democrat, to succeed Bill Bradley, the state's retiring Democratic senator, is one of the sleaziest and most costly in America this year. And it is also far too close to call, with at least a quarter of the voters undecided.

Although presidential polls have Mr Clinton easily ahead of Bob Dole in the Garden State, the notoriously indecisive voters of New Jersey have yet to place such faith in Mr Torricelli, a vain, slick Italian-American and former boyfriend of Bianca Jagger. Raged almost entirely over the television airwaves, the duel has degenerated into a mud-slinging contest of extraordinary proportions.

Mr Zimmer, 52, has painted his opponent as a divorced liberal without ethics, accusing him variously of fundraising on behalf of an executive with links to the Mafia, caring for the daughter of a South Korean fugitive from the FBI and supporting Hamas, the radical Palestinian group. For his part, Mr Torricelli, 45, has depicted the Republican as a surrogate of Newt Gingrich, the unpopular House Speaker, an ally of the tobacco companies and a politician whose key campaign strategist also has alleged ties to the Mob.

The claims and counter-claims with which both candidates have blanketed New Jersey were brought to a head last week in the studios of WTEV television in Trenton, where they met for the second of two public debates.

So bad has the feud become that neither man would shake hands, look the other in the eye, or attempt to engage the other in serious discourse about issues affecting their

Neither man would shake hands or look the other in the eye?

Republican in the mould of the ever popular Christie Todd Whitman, the Governor of New Jersey.

Mr Torricelli, a former aide to Vice-President Walter Mondale, has shown a conservative streak in voting for tough restrictions against illegal immigration.

"Both are in the centre of their parties and they really aren't all that different," said Ross Baker, a political scientist at Rutgers University.

"But they are transmuting molehills into mountains to gain votes."

If the Democrats are to have any hope of capturing the six Senate seats that currently keep the Republicans in power in the Senate, Mr Torricelli must win in New Jersey.

The only question for Mr Clinton, himself facing further sleaze allegations over political glad-handing with wealthy Indonesians, is how closely he will wish to be aligned with a candidate whose character is facing a daily pounding on the airwaves in the neighbouring conurbations of New York and Philadelphia.

TWA bomb theory is undermined by tests

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

METALLURGICAL tests have given rise to further suspicions that the TWA flight 800 disaster was caused by mechanical failure rather than terrorism, but the truth is still unclear.

It was reported yesterday that scientists who examined the airliner's central fuel tank believe that the explosion which sent the jumbo jet plunging into the Atlantic in July, killing 230 people, was less dramatic than a bomb.

The difference is down to a matter of a second, but metallurgists who have studied the wreckage of the fuel tank told *The Washington Post* that the damage patterns were typical of a "low order" explosion. The direction in which the metal bent suggested that the source of the blast

was inside the fuel tank. It did not, said the newspaper, appear to indicate the use of plastic explosive.

Not everyone agrees, but the receding likelihood that terrorism brought down the Paris-bound plane is a dubious comfort. It simply raises questions of air safety, particularly on elderly Boeing 747s.

The latest twist in a baffling investigation, one which has seen myriad theories and countless "false starts" regarding the likelihood of sabotage, coincided with reports of progress by the US Navy search team which has worked steadily to recover wreckage from the crash. The navy said its scanners had located a new seam of Flight 800 debris, including up to 400 pieces of the aircraft.

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Elected heir of imperial dynasty can offer European Union a few tips on eastward expansion

New waltz for Habsburgs

IF THE 20th century had taken a slightly different turn, Karl Habsburg would have been crowned prince of an empire straddling the centre of Europe. But as fate had it, his distant relative Franz Ferdinand visited Sarajevo and was shot dead, so two world wars later Karl has to make do with being a newly elected Austrian deputy to the European Parliament.

It is not quite the same thing, as his 83-year-old father Otto von Habsburg — himself a veteran European deputy for the Bavarian Christian Social Union — no doubt warned him. Even so, the imperial genes could come in useful. The Austro-Hungarian empire had its own currency, its own brand of Eurocrats and, long before the Maastricht treaty, a plausible version of flexible federalism.

Art caught in pogrom row

REBECCA WHITEREAD, the British sculptor, is at the centre of a row in Vienna. Next month, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi pogroms, the city was due to unveil her white concrete cube memorial to the survivors of the Holocaust.

The sculpture was supposed to sit in the middle of Judenplatz, a baroque

square. In digging up the cobbled square — in the heart of Vienna's ancient ghetto — builders found traces of a medieval pogrom when the Viennese set ablaze the synagogue. Archaeologists consider the find to be more important than Whiteread's sculpture. Local residents,

furious at losing their parking spaces, are also trying to stop the installation.

VIENNA FILE

by ROGER BOYES



football match. "Really? Who are we playing?" he asks. The 35-year-old former political science student has abandoned his dynastic pride. Like other members of his family — though not Uncle Felix, who was recently arrested when he tried to travel through Austria — he has renounced his claim to the imperial throne. During the European election campaign, however, he praised monarchical rule as a desirable system of government. Republics failed, he said, to bring up sons and daughters to be future presidents. Monarchs were clearly ahead in this respect.

Karl is an arch-conservative but the general view of his compatriots is that he is quite harmless. The more dynamic person in the Habsburg household is probably Francesca, his wife. She studied art history in London and put in a stint at Sotheby's, and has helped to set up a restoration project to save threatened art in Eastern Europe.

In the view of Vienna coffee house sages, the Habsburgs are behaving with considerably more dignity than many of the Austrian nobility who are scrambling for the return of former estates in Central Europe. Every duke or count seems to be filing suit in the hope of reclaiming an ancestral home or a stretch of woodland.



FRANZ NEUMAYR/REUTER

Young Hitler 'was admirer of the Jews'

HITLER, it seems, had nothing personal against the Jews. That is the main finding of a well-researched book, *Hitler's Vienna* (Piper Publishing House, Munich), by Austrian historian Brigitte Hamann, who has debunked some of the myths about the Nazi leader's early days.

Historians in the past claimed that personal friction between Hitler and Austrian Jews sparked his hatred. In fact, Professor Hamann found that Hitler got on well with Jewish pupils at his school in Linz, that he admired Jewish actors in the Linz theatre, and in Vienna enthusiastically attended Wagner operas directed by Gustav Mahler, the Jewish conductor and composer.

Professor Hamann — having dug up old medical bills — also refutes the theory that he was enraged by the fees charged by a Jewish doctor who treated the cancer of Hitler's mother. Nor is it true that Jewish professors rejected his application to the Vienna Art Academy.

Professor Hamann argues that Hitler's anti-Semitism was pragmatic rather than personal — a mimicking of populist politicians such as Karl Lüger, then Mayor of Vienna. Anti-Semitism was in the air and Hitler, as a politician on the make, sucked it in.

Italians buoyed by Kohl vow on entry to single currency

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

ROMANO PRODI, the Italian Prime Minister, reassured his compatriots yesterday after talks in Bonn that Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, "fully supported" the country's aspirations to join the single currency.

Signor Prodi said Herr Kohl had told him he saw "no obstacles to the re-entry of the lira into the exchange-rate mechanism (ERM), or to the lira joining the single currency".

But the German leader, who entertained Signor Prodi to dinner at the Chancellery in Bonn, did not commit himself to a timetable for Italian membership of economic and monetary union (EMU), and there is still speculation that Germany and France would prefer Italy and Spain to join the "single currency" soon after the starting date of January 1999 laid down in the Maastricht treaty. Herr Kohl met José María Aznar, the Spanish Prime Minister, for similar talks on Tuesday.

Signor Prodi said he expected the lira to re-enter the ERM — which it left with sterling in 1992 — "by the end of the

year". Italy would then comply with the Maastricht requirement that any currency joining EMU must have been in the ERM for two years beforehand. The Prime Minister said Herr Kohl had told him Germany wanted "a strong Italian presence in European institutions". *La Repubblica* said their meeting "was all dear Helmut, dear Romano".

There is, nonetheless, continuing disquiet in Italy over the insistence by Hans Tietmeyer, the Bundesbank chairman, that currencies joining EMU must have a "stable and durable" track record, and that budgetary "window-dressing" will be disallowed. The budget adopted by the Prodi Cabinet three weeks ago and now being debated by parliament is designed to cut the huge public deficit partly through spending cuts but also by revenue-raising measures, including a highly unpopular property tax, a vague "Euro tax", and unspecified "Treasury operations".

I Messaggero noted that Ulrich Cartellieri, of Deutsche Bank, had said this week that EMU would commence in 1999 with Germany, France, the Benelux countries, Ireland and Austria "but not initially with the Mediterranean nations". The paper said: "Herr Cartellieri evidently has an Italian name but Germanic determination."

Emma Marcegaglia, head of the Young Industrialists section of Confindustria, the Italian equivalent of the Confederation of British Industry, said that the Prodi budget failed to tackle structural problems and would cripple businesses rather than encourage growth. "We may get into Europe, but as a moribund country," she said.



Tietmeyer is opposed to weak economies joining

French phones ring millennial changes

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

MORE than 3,500 technicians were on hand to field an avalanche of queries from baffled French telephone customers last night when the country's eight-figure numbers gained a further two digits.

The change, which came into effect at 11pm French time, will expand the volume of possible numbers from 60 million to 470 million and increase the country's capacity for mobile telephones and computer modems.

It will create a stock of numbers lasting until the middle of the next century.

Under the new system France has been divided into five regions, each with a new double-digit prefix for domestic calls. Paris numbers now have the prefix 01, when calling within France. Numbers in the northwest are 02, the northeast 03, the southeast and Corsica 04 and the southwest 05. To call a French number from outside France, the first zero must be omitted.

In a report this month, the French Finance Ministry said that the use of personal computers, faxes and mobile telephones was being restricted by the limited supply of telephone numbers. France is

adding new telephone lines at the rate of one million a year and France Télécom predicted that, without extra numbers, the demand for lines would have outstripped availability as early as next year.

"It was the only way to confront the saturation that we were facing in the short term," said Jean-Pierre Poitevin, the France Télécom project director. As of last night's change there were nearly eight telephone numbers potentially available for every man, woman and child in France.

Michel Bon, president of France Télécom, said yesterday he had "no fear" that the move to a ten-digit system would cause problems, adding "this is an operation that has been three years in the planning".

But just in case, a campaign to explain the new system has been under way for the past six months, with advertisements on television, radio and in the press.

French telephone addicts were reassured to learn that if they happened to be talking on the telephone at the stroke of 11pm last night, they would not be cut off by the system in mid-conversation.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

THE MAGAZINE

Elaine Paige's long, show-stopping journey from Barnet to Broadway

THE CULTURE

Rhoda Koenig is bewildered by Britain's fascination with Arthur Miller

STYLE

Why being the hottest thing in town can sometimes leave a girl feeling cold

Make the most of winter sports — don't miss our great guide, FREE tomorrow. It's packed with features on ski resorts around the world, equipment, snowboarding and fashion. PLUS competitions and offers, including up to 20% off Crystal ski holidays for every reader — get the first of two tokens tomorrow

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

50 من الأصل



■ OPINION

Our greatest violinist turns into a pop pundit — and Mrs Bottomley rivals Mystic Meg



■ DANCE

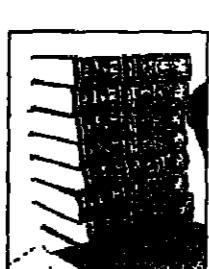
A night of dodgy tango opens the new Sadler's Wells season at the Peacock Theatre

THE ARTS



■ POP

Still rooted in the Sixties, Donovan provides a little mellow entertainment for Camden Town



■ ON MONDAY
With 26 million words, the new *Dictionary of Art* will be the publishing event of the decade

Readers who have nothing better to think about may recall that Dr Jack Cunningham, the Shadow Heritage Secretary, was recently chastised in this column. The reason? After a mere 16 years of preparing for government, the Labour Party appeared to have no cultural policy whatsoever.

I now realise that I was unfair. Even as I wrote, great thoughts were being formed. And this week Dr Jack introduced something called the "creative economy" — which I assumed meant plumbers demanding to be paid in cash, but in fact turns out to be Labour's arts strategy. Let's hear about it in Dr Jack's own words:

"I have chosen five key objectives for a leisure strategy. They are to encourage and enable creative talent; to promote greater access and participation; to build and nurture new audiences; to reverse Britain's declining share in world tourism; and to promote a 'sport for all' policy."

Amazing. How many spin-doc-

Top of the waffle charts this month

tors, researchers, brainstorming sessions and "widespread consultations" did it take to come up with that mind-numbing waste of oxygen? No wonder that Dr Jack wins our Waffle of the Week award.

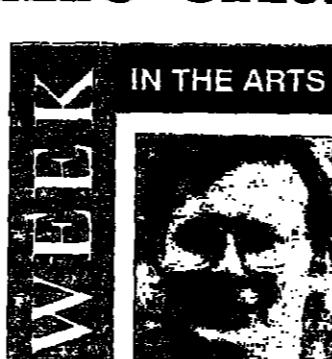
Here are some other outstanding contributions to the cultural arena in the past seven days:

Loony visionary of the week: To prove that this is a non-partisan column, we bestow this accolade on Dr Jack's opposite number, Virginia Bottomley. This week the incurably jolly Mrs B told a bemused audience at the Royal Society of Arts that "in a few years we will perhaps be able to look at the Getty Museum's collection in hologram, in the middle of our living room".

Well, I don't know about your living room, and I certainly haven't had the pleasure of a

bracing soiree round at Chateau Bottomley. But I'm not sure how I would fit a hologram of the Getty collection into mine. Could we squeeze the Roman mosaics between the jelly and the big pot plant, and shove the Old Masters next? That gaudy Bakelite clock which my wife snapped up (Getty-style) from a car-boot sale? It seems unlikely. Still, the promise of "a priceless art collection [in hologram form] in every British home by the millennium" might just swing a tight election.

Dubious notion of the week: The Society of London Theatre tells us that a show called *Titanic: The Musical* may hit the West End next year. Tasteless? You said it. But considering how many musicals turn into disasters, I guess it makes a kind of sense to turn a disaster into a musical.



RICHARD MORRISON

Working mum of the week: The American film director Allison Anders gives her child-minder a credit at the end of her new movie, *Grace of My Heart*. Who, I wonder, will be the first babysitter

to be thanked by some overwrought Oscar winner?

Sad author of the week: According to a list of hardback book sales to appear in *The Times* next week, Graham Swift's Booker Prize shortlisted novel, *Last Orders*, sold precisely three copies in the 600 monitored bookshops last week. Perhaps he should rename it "Any More Orders, Please"? Or perhaps he should ask his publisher some searching questions.

Waste of the week: Last night, Nigel Kennedy made his debut as a Top of the Pops presenter. Yes, the prodigy whose performance of Elgar's Violin Concerto once moved even this stony countenance to something approaching emotion is now reduced to spouting bursts of blabber between Boyzone and the Boo Radleys. Has

he no kind friend who can lead him gently back to his fiddle? Or will Nige drift through the rest of his life in a fog of self-imposed mediocrity, much to the irritation of those of us who have no choice but to be average.

Postmodern chic of the week: The Institute of Contemporary Arts, which is given £315,000 by the Arts Council each year so that it can be at the "cutting edge" of all that's pretentious, is hosting a conference next Saturday devoted to James Bond. Fashion gurus will earnestly debate 007's changing wardrobe. A "collector of Bond memorabilia" will talk about "Bond and Obsession"; a design expert will discuss "Bond and Architecture"; and a London University professor will speak about "Bond and new technology". No folks; it's not April 1 — just the

wacky world of subsidised arts. Which brings us to ...

Quango of the week: Step forward the London Arts Board — all 272 of you. According to the LAB's latest report, it has 37 full-time officers, 15 board members and a remarkable 220 "advisers and assessors". No wonder that the chairman of this merry multitude, Clive Priestley, writes that the LAB's "two main tasks are administration and the exercise of influence". Since many of the 220 advisers and assessors are people who benefit from the LAB's own grants, I should imagine that influence is being exercised very nicely, thank you.

There are no fewer than ten such regional arts boards in England — plus hundreds of other "advisers" who sit on the national arts councils' numerous committees. No wonder that the fastest growing ariform in the subsidised cultural world is inertia. Jack Cunningham should fit in well if he becomes arts minister.

Still mad about saffron

DONOVAN cannot, it seems, escape his past: a recent tour of America had to be cancelled because he could not get a visa on account of a 25-year-old drug conviction. And, to be honest, he does not sound like a man desperately trying to break free from the shackles of the 1960s.

As he stood on stage in the Britpop capital of Camden Town, just one man and his guitar, it was hard to think of any other artist who has

Donovan
Dingwalls, NW1

changed so little over 30 years. Donovan is forever mellow yellow, the sunshine superman incarnate who is still trying to catch the wind.

True, the Happy Mondays borrowed a few of his trippier tunes and named a 1990s drug anthem in his honour, and the very fashionable Rick Rubin produced his new album, *Sufi*. But the man himself remains unmoved by the passing vagaries of musical fashion. His new label makes a virtue of this, talking not of some brave new direction but the resumption of a journey, a magic that is about to be felt again.

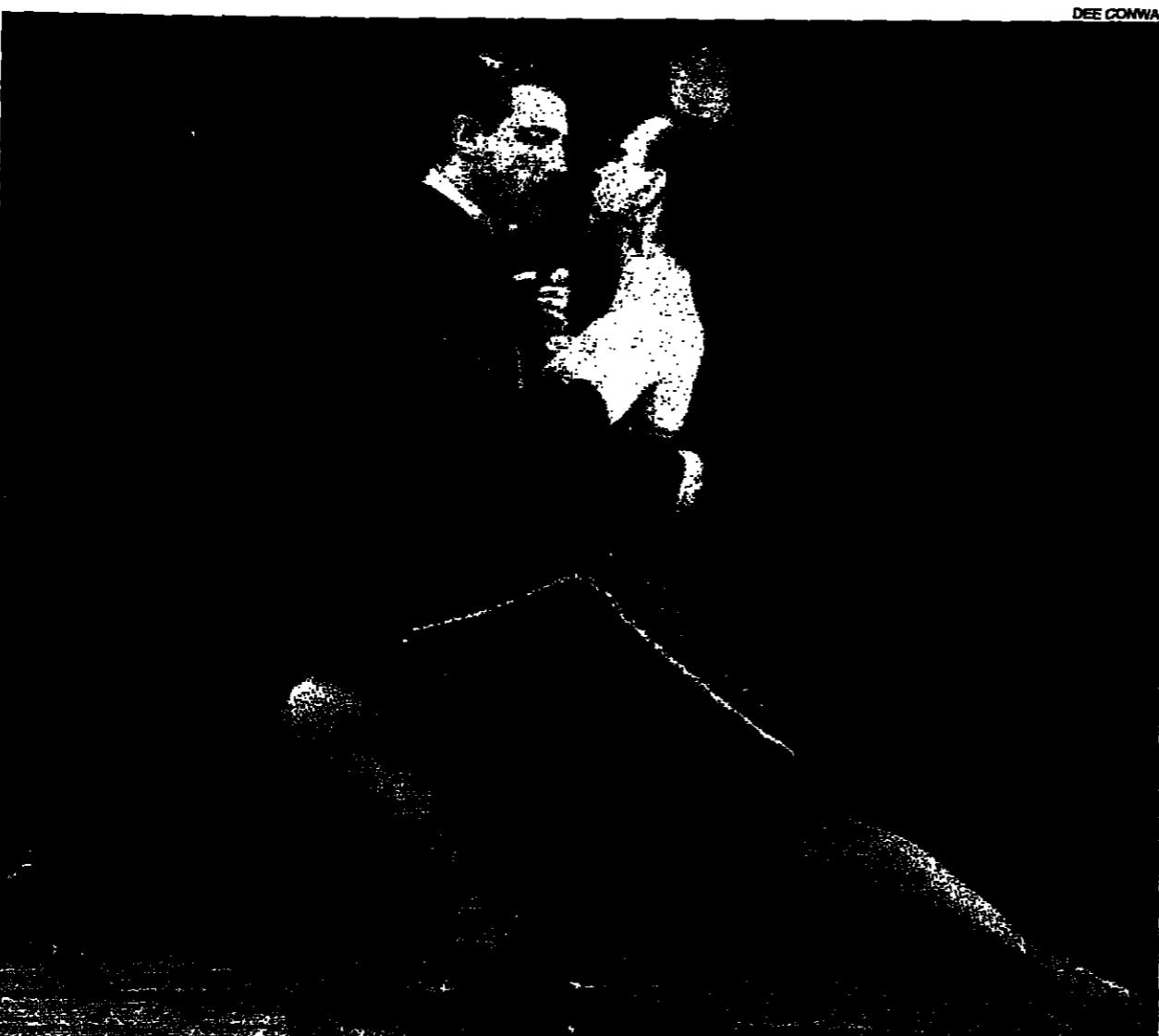
And, yes, there was a certain magic in the air. He sang songs from the new album full of all the classic Donovan hallmarks — gentle folk melodies, a voice that quivers with sincerity and lyrics full of benedictions, mystical invocations and tributes to Mother Earth. But it was the 1960s troubadour the sell-out crowd had come to hear and he knew it too.

He played all of the oldies with panache and affection, starting with *Catch the Wind* and working his way through *Hurdy Gurdy Man* and *Colours to Sunshine Superman* and *Mellow Yellow*. There was none of that weary supercilious disdain for the old favourites: instead they were treated like much-loved children now grown up in years but in the mind's eye still cavorting innocently in some golden nursery of youth.

No matter that he still sounds the same after all these years. Better than becoming a parody of yourself, like Bob Dylan, his one-time inspiration. Some might call it fossilisation. The crowd on Wednesday night would have called it maintaining integrity in a fickle old world.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

DANCE: Debra Craine on a trial by tango at Sadler's Wells's fill-in home



"Less like seductive coupling and more like tedious duty": Miguel Angel Zotto and Milena Plebs of Tango Por Dos

Cry, Argentina

While one set of builders was demolishing the old Sadler's Wells, another was frantically working to get its temporary home up and running in time for its opening on Wednesday night.

It certainly needs it. The auditorium, built in 1960, is shabby and grim: the bars and public areas are tacky. But a start has been made.

The theatre has an enlarged orchestra pit and the new box office and main foyer, with their clean white spaciousness, hint at better things to come. And, once inside the 1,000-seat auditorium, the attractions of the Peacock become apparent — great sightlines and a lovely wide stage.

The Peacock opened the kind of popular dance show this venue is likely to encourage. One trusts, though, that future offerings will be better than Tango For Dos. The company is run by Miguel Angel Zotto and Milena Plebs, the stars of

applied for lottery funding to completely refurbish the Peacock, both front of house and backstage.

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is run by

Miguel Angel

Zotto and

Milena Plebs, the

stars of

the show.

Tango Argentino, which was a massive hit a few years back.

Their show, *Perfumes de Tango*, promises to evoke the particular magic of a Buenos Aires tango club.

There is not much likelihood

of that in this dull cabaret.

You would be hard-pressed to catch a whiff of the tango's lowlife origins in the back streets of Buenos Aires.

The basic instincts manifest

in the dance form here

look less like seduc-

tive coupling and

more like tedious

urgency of the tan-

go's raw expression

has been tamed into

timidity: the vignettes of passion, death and

betrayal are all colourless.

The show encompasses a

variety of tango styles,

from its early rhythmic

incarnation of

machismo swagger

through to its emer-

gence in the tango

halves of Buenos Aires and the

ballrooms of Europe, its love

duty. The tango's raw expression

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IT'S BAD TO STALK

But the law needs very careful drafting

Nobody doubts the genuine distress that a stalker intent upon intimidating his (or occasionally her) victim can inflict. Until now, it has been hard to secure criminal convictions for stalkers: the prosecution has had to prove either that the stalker intended to harass the victim or that the victim suffered psychological grievous bodily harm. A well drafted law against stalking could make successful prosecution easier, but a badly drafted one could have serious unintended consequences.

The new laws against stalking proposed yesterday by the Home Office Minister, David Maclean, have the merit of offering a graduated series of responses to the problem of stalking. First, a new civil remedy is offered under which a victim could gain an injunction against a stalker. Then there are two criminal offences. The less serious — "the use of words or behaviour, on more than one occasion, which would cause the victim to be harassed, alarmed or distressed" — carries a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment or a £5,000 fine or both. The most serious — putting the victim in fear of violence — could lead to five years' in jail and an unlimited fine.

With all attempts, however worthy, to create a new crime, legislators should first ensure that innocent people will not suffer as a result. The dangers of creating a stalking offence are threefold: that those going legitimately about their business will be caught in the net, that people will be vengefully accused of stalking, or that their motives will be misinterpreted.

As a newspaper, we are concerned that journalists investigating a story in the public interest could be caught by this legislation. As presently drafted, there will be a defence of "acting reasonably and necessarily in

pursuit of a business, trade or profession, or other lawful activity". It is to be hoped that reporters will not have to be taken to court and acquitted before the police accept that there is no ground for arrest.

There is also a chance that a vindictive "victim" will accuse someone else of stalking as an act of revenge. Attention which might well have been welcome could suddenly be claimed to be harassment. Courts will need to demand evidence that victims made their displeasure clear to the stalker.

The third danger is that criminals will be made out of harmless, lovesick people who cannot resist going to places where they hope to catch sight of their beloved, or who bombard them with flowers or gifts under the genuine impression that their target will eventually capitulate. At one end of this spectrum of behaviour is the besotted adolescent, in the middle is the slightly creepy obsessive, and at the far end is the determined stalker. Drawing the line in the right place may prove extremely difficult.

One remedy would be for the police to issue a "yellow card" warning to alleged stalkers before embarking on any further action. This would have the merit of avoiding the cumbersome machinery of the court, while alerting the lovesick that, even if they mean no harm, their victim is suffering as a consequence of their actions. In cases of false accusation, it would give the person concerned a chance to break contact with the accuser before being branded a criminal.

Because there is all-party consensus on the need for a law against stalking, there is a risk that legislation will be rushed through Parliament without sufficient consideration. Even if MPs agree on the principle, they should think hard about the practical application of such a Bill.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The American presidential debates have shown their merit

Most US political commentators have pronounced themselves somewhat dissatisfied with the short set of presidential debates that ended this week in San Diego. They claim the public knows no more about what either man would do in office if elected than beforehand. The discussions are said to have been dull: no candidate has produced a dramatic new policy, launched a blistering attack, coined a memorable new slogan or committed a hugely embarrassing error.

The American people, however, are rather more appreciative than the political elite. Tens of millions continue to watch despite the dozens of alternative attractions provided by the US television industry. Voting citizens regard them as a real opportunity to compare their prospective leaders and decide how comfortable they would be with one or other in the Oval Office. Largely by mass expectation, every election since 1976 has included at least one presidential debate. By popular demand they are now institutionalised.

Despite the protestations of the pundits, the gathering in San Diego told us a great deal about the election of 1996. But it did so through an unusual medium, the audience themselves. The California debate was conducted as a "town meeting" with a representative sample of electors providing the questions. What they asked, or did not ask, throws much light on the reasons why President Clinton is cruising to re-election despite a record in office that can be fairly described as mixed.

Not a single citizen wanted answers on the various scandals that have dogged the First Couple and the Administration, to the evident frustration of Robert Dole who would have dearly loved the debate to be cast in those terms. The issues of abortion and welfare reform — which so galvanised

activists at the two national conventions — were almost invisible. Only one participant raised a matter of foreign relations, and that related to the security of Israel. Mr Dole would have welcomed more. Even the economy had a modest profile, reflecting broad satisfaction with the President's status quo and renders Americans unwilling to adopt the Dole-Kemp tax cuts. Possibly more encouraging for Republicans, who fear a big Clinton win might assist Democrats on Capitol Hill, Congress was not mentioned by the assembled voters.

Instead, it was the mainstream matters of domestic politics that dominated the proceedings. The future of Social Security, Medicare, the state of the US health sector, and employment law, figured strongly. In all these instances, the President stressed the popular position he had taken in the budget battle of 1995, while Mr Dole struggled to remind viewers how much they had disliked the policies Bill Clinton had pursued in 1993 and 1994. If, as seems likely, the President wins by a comfortable margin, this debate will have provided a neat snapshot of the public mood that made it possible.

The American experience should provide ammunition for those who would like to see British party leaders meet in a similar format. If there is a problem with the US example, it is that the election season is almost the only time when debates of this sort happen. Inevitably, therefore, they are rather stilted in style. If, as we are regularly told, the House of Commons is the finest example of a deliberative chamber democracy has yet produced, then our televised product should be of a more vigorous nature. Even if voters learnt nothing new about their leaders, it would be worth the experiment to see what new could be discovered about themselves.

HALF TERM REPORT

The new time to pack the suitcases and the motorways

It is half-term, and there is gridlock on the roads. The cars are packed, and so are the airports. And for the next week, secretaries across the country will have their inventiveness tested as they try to explain the absence of the managing director, the chief accountant and most of the board members who are on what might be called an extended youth seminar — or, more accurately, taking the kids away for the half-term break. The ancient feast of Michaelmas, that broke up the long autumn of work, has been unofficially revived. Half-term has descended on Britain as the newest, least publicised and probably most welcome holiday of the year.

Until about 15 years ago the autumn term, the longest in the school year, was three months of unbroken slog, and mothers could look forward to washing muddy soccer shorts from Harvest Festival until Christmas, with only a long weekend off in mid-October. Union power, however, skilfully allied to specious arguments about school maintenance, changed all that. Would not a full week off give teachers the time for valuable in-service training, schools a chance to arrange their football tours and pupils the opportunity to go for their Duke of Edinburgh awards? Independent schools — which prided themselves on a holiday timetable that bore little relation to the state sector — were rapidly convinced. A unified, 10-day national holiday was born.

Half-term plays havoc with office etiquette. Proud executives, all braces, shirt-

sleeves and macho determination to leave the office last, are unusually vulnerable to the half-term pitch. "Would it be all right if I could just take this week off? It's for the kids, you know. Promised last year we'd take them to Disneyland, and I've been away so much recently..." Guilt, of course, is the deciding factor. Every top manager knows that he or she should be spending more "quality time" with their two young children. Every working mother frustrated by the hours away from home sees a welcome chance for a family get-together or a surprise trip abroad.

Half-term now is parents' national truant week. The only people left in offices are those without children. Even they are quick with implausible stories of nieces and nephews coming for a visit. The fact that so many are now on second or third marriages has brought the eastern pattern of the extended family to the heart of British office life. There are always children from this or that marriage who are home from school. The Child Support Agency could spare some hours of expensive sleuthing by simply taking a head-count of who is supposedly away this week with the children.

Nevertheless, the holiday is not quite official — yet. It is still a secret of those who can afford an extra break in the cold days of Autumn. Better then, to argue that the entire week is a selfless devotion to parental duty, and has nothing to do with the wish to sneak away while the last rays of sun are still around.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Widening targets on gun control

From Mr D. T. Argent

Sir, The anti-gun lobby is to be congratulated on its substantial success (reports, October 15, 16; see also letters, October 17), achieved by exploiting wholly understandable emotions and ensuring that no debate has actually taken place.

The media have been only too willing to assist, it being far easier to claim the moral high ground than coolly to address the many and complex issues involved. Indeed, simply to argue that there are conflicting interests to be balanced is to run the risk of being sneered at.

As a result, a large body of unruly law-abiding sportsmen and women are to be denied a safe and enjoyable pastime (and in many cases their livelihood).

Do we really live in a society which believes, despite all the evidence, that all that is needed is to stop something happening is to make it illegal?

Yours faithfully,
D. T. ARGENT,
Cobblers,
Church Street, Rudgwick,
Horsham, West Sussex.
October 17.

From Mr Kim Swain

Sir, Now that it is clear that the Government intends to enact firearms legislation in a way described by Lord Cullen as draconian (report, October 17), I would be interested to know what HM Treasury has to say. However distasteful it may seem, the Government does place a monetary value on human life.

This value, which it has told me, is currently approximately £800,000, is used in economic appraisals of, for instance, road safety improvement schemes. An economic balance is sought to be struck between the cost of the works and the "savings", ie, fewer road-traffic accident casualties.

If the Treasury assessed the compensation, redundancy and other social costs resulting from implementing the gun control proposals (say halfway between an estimate of £140 million compensation which I have seen mentioned, and £1 billion put forward by those opposed to the measures), and assuming one occurrence like the tragedy at Dunblane every nine years (the duration between Hungerford and Dunblane), over say 30 years the cost to the Exchequer might be perhaps £400 million in real terms.

The Government cannot satisfy both sides in this emotional, polarised debate. If it does press ahead with the proposals it should publicly acknowledge that this is the price it believes British society should pay. In that case these funds might no longer be available to meet other deserving social needs, such as those of the aged, sick, infirm or disadvantaged.

If our morning spiritual reflections are to consist of the trumpeting of the faults and perceived sins of other Christians, then perhaps it would be better not to have such intrusions into our only quiet and reflective time of the day, be it shaving or stuck in crawling traffic.

Could I suggest that we have a *Thought for the Day* on a Quaker model — a period of silence while we reflect on some truth or portion of scripture or Talmud or Koran. How about starting with Matthew vii, 1: "Judge not, that ye may not be judged". Mrs Atkins and all of us should reflect on this, perhaps.

Guns which are used a lot need constant cleaning and maintenance, and I prefer to do this quietly at home, where I could take my time, rather than in a rush in the cramped gunroom at the club. I am not surprised at how few accidents there are as training and safety standards are high and all licenses are vetted.

Though I quite understand the wish of many to ban guns I am also sorry for the thousands of responsible people who will have to give up their favourite sport.

Yours faithfully,
EMMA TEMPLE,
Lower Spargate Farm,
Evercreech, Somerset.
October 17.

From Mr James Darley

Sir, Some sensible restrictions on gun ownership seem long overdue, notably to crack down on the "Dirty Harry" and "Green Beret" fantasists, elements with which I believe the majority of the sporting shooting community like myself are deeply uncomfortable.

But in banning most, or all target pistols we risk losing sight of the failure behind the Dunblane terror — the police failure, in spite of signals and internal alerts, to enforce legislation that could have prevented such a danger.

When a Cabinet minister tells us, as Michael Heseltine did last night on *Question Time*, that the new security regulations would be "rigorously enforced", we might be forgiven for a sense of *déjà-vu*. I do not believe we can count on this. The firearms knowledge of most police officers seems woefully shallow.

Next time something goes badly wrong shall we again expect the police, press and politicians to clamour for further restrictions on lawful shooting sportsmen?

Yours truly,
JAMES DARLEY,
39 Buckland Road, Buckland,
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.
October 18.

Importance of the old school tie in modern British life

From Sir Horace Phillips

Sir, If there is one area that vindicates William Rees-Mogg's dismissal of supposed predominance of class in modern British life ("Class politics is below the salt", October 14) it is surely the diplomatic service. From being in the past, and up to early this century, an élite body in the social and educational context, it has gradually evolved as purely a meritocracy. This development owes much to Anthony Eden, mentioned by Rees-Mogg.

Eden, an Etonian, saw for himself class differences sunk in First World War trenches, where he won the Military Cross. As Foreign Secretary during the Second World War he determined that young men fighting for their country should afterwards be able to serve it in the diplomatic service if they wished, whatever their origins or incomes.

His proposals were set out in a White Paper in 1943. The new criterion for admission to the service would be success in a competitive written examination and a searching assessment of personality. A candidate's school or university (if any) would not be a determining factor. He would pass or fail on the examination result.

This continues today and has led to the broadening of the service and the removal of class distinctions from it. No one in it ever judges a colleague by his social or educational background — and would certainly not make capital out of his own.

Yours faithfully,
HORACE PHILLIPS
(Diplomatic service, 1947-77),
34a Sheridan Road,
Merton Park, SW19.
October 14.

From Mr J. E. F. Clarke

Sir, William Rees-Mogg's central point, that the "old school tie" (ie, class) is of little import in modern and thriving Britain, sounds rather wide of the mark. The senior reaches of British institutions — the City, the military, the legal and medical professions, the monarch's chosen couriers and advisers etc — are thronged with products of the public schools.

Mr Major seemed to have forgotten both the background and aspirations of his immediate audience. Since when have most ambitious Tory

middle-class people not striven or yearned for their children to have the demonstrable advantages of a public school?

Again, Major implied that a (blended) grammar school education, such as he and Kenneth Clarke had, had proved a disadvantage to their success at the commanding heights of political life. However, in spite of Clarke's and Blair's different initial schooling they share an even more potent source of widespread and assured success in modern Britain: Oxbridge, the ultimate finishing schools.

Yours faithfully,
JAMES CLARKE,
18 Oakbank,
Guildford Road, Woking, Surrey.
October 14.

From Mr A. J. Turner

Sir, Neither your columnists nor Conservative MPs have reason to criticise the Prime Minister for his "new Labour/old school tie" remark.

New Labour would make access to independent schools a privilege of the wealthy to a greater extent than for 50 years. Fees will go up *if*, as many people expect, Labour attacks their charitable status.

Labour would abolish the assisted places scheme, only saving sufficient money to (at best) put one extra teacher into every eight council schools.

They would undermine the hard-won freedoms and better spending decisions of all state schools (grant-maintained or council-run) by handing 10 per cent of their budget back to council officers to control.

Conservatives make no bones about their support for both state and independent schools. No Conservative therefore need be ashamed or embarrassed by either his own education or his decisions about the education of his children.

The Prime Minister's remarks remind electors of Labour's belief that what is good enough for themselves and their children is too good for the children of ordinary voters.

Your obedient servant,
ANDREW TURNER
(Director, Grant Maintained Schools Foundation),
32 New High Street,
Headington, Oxford.
October 14.

From Mr John D. Hart

Sir, Peter Riddell says (October 12) that John Major "should be careful about attacking people from privileged backgrounds: almost three-fifths of his Cabinet sitting behind him went to public schools, including three Old Etonians".

I watched the whole of the Prime Minister's speech on television and it was quite clear to me that he was not attacking such people: he was attacking those who, having enjoyed the opportunity of such an education themselves, wish to deprive other children — except their own, of course — of the chance to benefit from an "elite" education.

In this respect new Labour is following the tradition of old Labour when its ministers, themselves the products of independent or grammar schools, sought to impose the straitjacket of comprehensive education upon the whole country, with the support of the chattering classes of the time. They, of course, had the advantage of the same educational background.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN D. HART,
Hill House, Marlesford,
Woodbridge, Suffolk.
October 16.

From Mr Hugh M. Lowe

Sir, Before the election campaign really gets going, would Mr Major make at least one thing absolutely clear: does he sneer at everyone who wears an old school tie or only at Tony Blair?

Yours faithfully,
HUGH M. LOWE,
36 Fontwell Close,
Rustington, West Sussex.
October 16.

From Mr John Hobbs

Sir, Opinions may differ about the wisdom of Mr Major's reference to new Labour/old school tie but surely no one can doubt that the Tory party is above class when he reads of Aircraftman Mogg selflessly toiling in the ranks between Charterhouse and Balliol.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HOBBS,
126 Gurney Close, Barking, Essex.
October 14.

Right to privacy

From Mr David Sagar

Sir, Lord Cranborne's assertion (article, October 11) that Britain doesn't need a written constitution bestowing rights and freedoms because our citizens have them anyway, is put into question in one respect in your Law Reports of the same day. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission case confirms that there is no general right of privacy as such.

Thus many people and their families suffer because of the Government's reluctance to afford them the protection of a law which is available in other countries. Is it not time to confer a legal right of individual privacy with exceptions to protect the public interest, and with remedies in damages as well as injunctions to prevent harmful publicity in advance?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID SAGAR,
51 Cadogan Gardens, SW3.
October 12.

Practical praise

From Mrs P. A. Mills</



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

October 18: The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh this morning arrived at Tower Pier and were received by the Resident Governor of Her Majesty's Tower of London (Major General Geoffrey Field) and the Chairman, Port of London Authority (Sir Brian Shand).
Her Majesty and His Royal Highness embarked in the new Thames passenger vessel, *Millennium of London*, and were received by the Directors of City Cruises (Mr Paul Wilson, Miss Rita Beckwith and Mr Gary Beckwith).

The Queen named *Millennium of London*.

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness subsequently travelled upriver to Westminster Pier.

The Queen's Barge Master and Watermen were on duty.

The Duke of Edinburgh, Master, this afternoon attended a luncheon at Trinity House, Tower Hill, London EC4.

His Royal Highness, President, World Wide Fund for Nature-WWF International, this evening attended the Wildscreen 1996 Award

Ceremony at Colston Hall, Bristol, and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the City of Bristol (Mrs James Tidmarsh).

KENNINGTON PALACE

October 18: The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon this afternoon visited St George's School, Windsor Castle.

YORK HOUSE

October 18: The Duke of Kent, President, the Stroke Association, this morning visited the Stroke Research Unit, University of Nottingham, and was seen on arrival by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire (Sir Andrew Broughton-Biggs).

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness embarked in the new Thames passenger vessel, *Millennium of London*, and were received by the Directors of City Cruises (Mr Paul Wilson, Miss Rita Beckwith and Mr Gary Beckwith).

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ROYAL ENGAGEMENT

TOMORROW: The Prince of Wales, as President of Wales, will be host to a reception at Saltram Castle at 2.30.

Old Millhillians Club

On Friday, November 8, 1996, the Club are pleased to be hosting the North West Dinner at St James's Club, Charlotte Street, Manchester. Principal guest speakers will be the Headmaster and the President of the Club, Old Millhillians wishing to attend should contact Peter Huston, 33 Rivington Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 0PJ, 061 941 1328, for more information.

Painter-Stainers' Company

The following have been installed officers of the Painter-Stainers' Company for the ensuing year:
Master: Revd Canon Robert Jacobs; Upper Warden: Revd Canon Mr Robert Gough; Lower Warden: Mr Robert Gough.

Plumbers' Company

The following have been installed officers of the Plumbers' Company for the ensuing year:
Master: Mr C.D. Smith; Upper Warden: Mr E.W. Hopkinson.

VALUAR 6.30 Evening, Canon O'Conor, CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, 10 M. Ireland 10.15 Each. Choral E. Hasker. Tone: 'I am the vine'. In F. How beautiful are their feet (Blaauw). The Provost.

ARMAGH CATHEDRAL: 10 HC, 11 Each. Celtic Mass. Canon J. Doherty. Tone: 'The Word in C minor'. O Lord make thy workers...

BANGOR CATHEDRAL: 15 G. Loughnane.

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL: 9 MP, 11 HC, 11 Choral Euch. Mass for Our Voices (Hall). God be in thy goodness (Ashley). Re: Waterford, 4 Choral Euch.

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, The Provost.

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL: 10 HC, 11 Choral Euch. Mass for Our Voices (Hall). God be in thy goodness (Ashley). Re: Waterford, 4 Choral Euch.

CAERPHILLY CATHEDRAL: 10 HC, 11 Choral Euch. Mass for Our Voices (Hall). God be in thy goodness (Ashley). Re: Waterford, 4 Choral Euch.

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, 9.30 AM, 11 S. Each. Mass for Our Voices (Hall). God be in thy goodness (Ashley). Re: Waterford, 4 Choral Euch.

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, 10 Each. Canon J. Chapman. Tone: 'I am the vine'. In F. How beautiful are their feet (Blaauw).

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL: 7.45 AM, 8 HC, 10 Choral Euch. Mass for Our Voices (Hall). God be in thy goodness (Ashley). Re: Waterford, 4 Choral Euch.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, 10.30 S. Each.

ELIZABETH TOWER: 6.30 HC, 10.30 S. Each. Canon J. Chapman. Tone: 'I am the vine'. In F. How beautiful are their feet (Blaauw).

FARNBOROUGH CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, 9.30 AM, 10 Choral Euch. Mass for Our Voices (Hall). God be in thy goodness (Ashley). Re: Waterford, 4 Choral Euch.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, 10.30 S. Each. Canon J. Chapman. Tone: 'I am the vine'. In F. How beautiful are their feet (Blaauw).

HARROGATE: 7.30 AM, 8 HC, 10 Choral Euch.

HARWICH: 7.30 AM, 8 HC, 10 Choral Euch.

SECTION

MAGAZINE

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 Jimmy riddle: what drives Goldsmith? Page 19

Weekend

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Property: Dealing with subsidence Pages 1-2
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drama



Low-fat cooking: second part of series Page 34
 Books Pages 1-2
 Seven-day TV and radio guide Pages 23-30

NEWS

Head's wife urges moral crusade

The widow of the murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence called for a public debate to consider how to rid society of violence and establish new moral codes, especially among young people. Frances Lawrence said that by launching her campaign she was carrying out her husband's wishes Pages 1, 3

Court battle to cut drug costs

Popular over-the-counter medicines could become cheaper if the Office of Fair Trading succeeds in an attempt to outlaw price-fixing by drug companies. The Director-General is applying to a court to recommend the abolition of a 26-year-old agreement which sets a minimum price for 2,273 brands of vitamins, syrups, tablets, lozenges and ointments Page 1

Catholic manifesto

The Roman Catholic Church is about to plunge into the political minefield with a 13,000-word document on the principles of its social teaching Page 1

Yeltsin purge

Boris Yeltsin removed Russia's highest-ranking military officer from his post Pages 1, 14, 15

Widow wins support

Diane Blood, the widow who is seeking the right to bear her late husband's baby, said she had been overwhelmed by messages of support from the public Page 2

Don's admission

The principal of a Durham University college admitted that he did not hold three of the degrees listed under his name Page 4

Driver fights for life

A motorist who was hit by a concrete block hurled from a motorway bridge was fighting for his life Page 5

Railways go to war with water cannon

A secret weapon against the railways' most celebrated excuse for delays is being tested by Railtrack. A small locomotive has been fitted with a water cannon so powerful that it can cut through wood. Engineers hope that it will end the annual embarrassment of delays caused by leaves on the line Page 9

NATURE NOTES

French Goldsmith Delicious (Major'sendum referendum)
This import has gained prominence by aggressive, expensive marketing. Leaves a sour taste in many MP's mouths.

OPINION

It's bad to stalk: A well-drafted law against stalking could make successful prosecution easier; a badly drafted one could have serious unintended consequences Page 23

Questions and answers: The US presidential debates should give ammunition for those who would like to see British party leaders meet in a similar format Page 23

LETTERS

Relevance of old school tie gun control; Thought for the Day; right to privacy; modern hymns Page 23

COLUMNS

Simon Jenkins: Incidents such as Dunblane and Hungerford are so rare and so awful as to form a poor basis for legislation Page 22

Angela Goodwin: At least some modern republicans might be quietened if the Crown's still considerable wealth were channelled into artistic patronage Page 22

OBITUARIES

Jack Robertson, Test cricketer; Helmut Hessebeller, writer; Ivan Waller, mountaineer, racing motorist and engineer Page 25

BUSINESS

Bid battle: The fight for Lloyds Chemists resumed after the DTI cleared Uni-Chem and Gehe to make bids Page 27

Losing steam: Lending figures from banks and building societies showed weakening in the amount of borrowing Page 27

GETTING PERSONAL

Virgin is to move into the personal pensions market Page 27

MARKETS

The FTSE 100 index rose 11.0 points to close at 4053.1. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 89.0 to 89.3 Page 30

SPORT

Tennis: Tim Henman made it through to the semi-finals of the Czech indoor tournament with an outstanding win over the world No 7, Yannick Ferreira Page 52

Golf: Ernie Els, the defending champion, recovered from six down to beat Steve Stricker in the Toyota World Match Play Championship Page 52

FOOTBALL

Last-ditch negotiations are to be held between the Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association to try to prevent a walkout by Nationwide League players Page 52

ARTS

Virtually priceless: "Mrs Bottomley's vision of an art collection (in hologram form) in every living room by the millennium might just swing a tight election," Richard Morrison writes Page 21

Ever mellow: Donovan back on stage Page 21

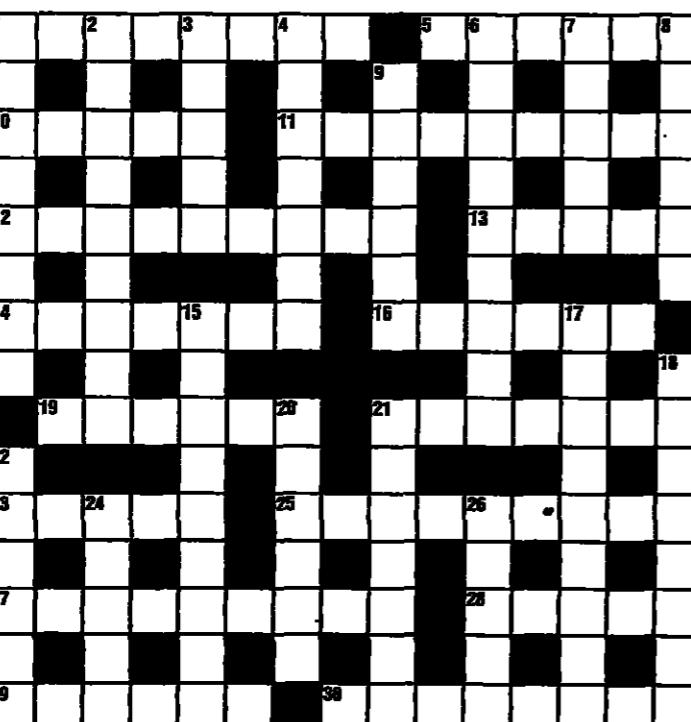
TANGO TIME

Dodgy choice for Sadler's Wells's debut at stand-in-home Page 21

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,303

ABERLOUR A limited edition, 1970 vintage bottle of Aberlour single malt whisky, the only malt whisky to have twice won the prestigious Gold Medal and Pot Still Trophy at the International Wine & Spirit Competition, will be given for the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: The Times, Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 486, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The winners and solution will be published next Saturday.

Name/Address



ACROSS
 1 Impresario favouring crude material (8).
 5 Outside church espy distraught maidenly soul (6).
 10 Cut grass (5).
 11 Encounter and manage this sort of clause (3,6).
 12 Command members to put rifles down (5,4).
 13 Apart from its source, river is dark brown (5).
 14 Whimsical given point by characters in *Animal Farm* (7).
 16 Teetotal, without musical sensitivity, and dull (6).
 19 Less straightforward chess manoeuvre (6).
 21 Heifer-skeller at a fair takes the biscuit (7).
 23 Small round river that's endless (5).
 25 Cal, perhaps, in a state (3,6).
 27 Customs turned back art volume out east (9).
 28 Company board (5).
 29 Mark time in sensibly (6).
 30 Sergeant given new orders to drive away (8).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,297

Solution to Puzzle No 20,302

BOOPPER AFLUTTERER R Y X M I N I U N I AEROPLANE BATON N A E R I A G S DEMONIC DERANGE I U S H T I R A SUSHI ICECREAM H V N L E R IN LEAGUE MAINE J I O G A N P EMPEROR REISSUE T P I D A N T A SHEAF EXPEDIENT A R L R H E A E MASSEUSE TRADER LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: P. Fitzmaria, Banstead, Surrey; J. S. Wills, Cheltenham; C. G. Morris; F. Schwarz, Brookhouse, Lancaster; P. Jellett, London; J. O'Brien, Clifton, Bristol.

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Orlando 0336 401 895

TODAY

Sun rises: 7.22 am Sun sets: 5.59 pm

Moon rises: 11.45 pm Moon sets: 2.14 pm

First quarter today

London 5.59 pm to 7.34 am

Brighton 6.08 pm to 7.43 am

Edinburgh 6.02 pm to 7.25 am

Manchester 6.00 pm to 7.46 am

Penzance 6.22 pm to 7.53 am

TOMORROW

Sun rises: 7.34 am Sun sets: 5.58 pm

Moon rises: 11.25 pm Moon sets: 2.05 pm

Full moon October 28

London 5.59 pm to 7.45 am

Edinburgh 6.02 pm to 7.57 am

Manchester 6.01 pm to 7.48 am

Penzance 6.20 pm to 7.54 am

TONIGHT

Sun rises: 7.45 am Sun sets: 5.57 pm

Moon rises: 11.30 pm Moon sets: 2.17 pm

Full moon October 29

London 5.59 pm to 7.46 am

Edinburgh 6.02 pm to 7.59 am

Manchester 6.01 pm to 7.47 am

Penzance 6.21 pm to 7.55 am

TOMORROW

Sun rises: 7.46 am Sun sets: 5.56 pm

Moon rises: 11.31 pm Moon sets: 2.20 pm

Full moon October 30

London 5.59 pm to 7.47 am

Edinburgh 6.02 pm to 7.60 am

Manchester 6.01 pm to 7.49 am

Penzance 6.21 pm to 7.56 am

TOMORROW

Sun rises: 7.47 am Sun sets: 5.55 pm

Moon rises: 11.32 pm Moon sets: 2.21 pm

Full moon October 31

London 5.59 pm to 7.48 am

Edinburgh 6.02 pm to 7.61 am

Manchester 6.01 pm to 7.50 am

Penzance 6.21 pm to 7.57 am

TOMORROW

Sun rises: 7.48 am Sun sets: 5.54 pm

Moon rises: 11.33 pm Moon sets: 2.22 pm

Full moon October 32

London 5.59 pm to 7.49 am

Edinburgh 6.02 pm to 7.62 am

Manchester 6.01 pm to 7.51 am

Penzance 6.21 pm to 7.58 am

TOMORROW

Sun rises: 7.49 am Sun sets: 5.53 pm

Moon rises: 11.34 pm Moon sets: 2.23 pm